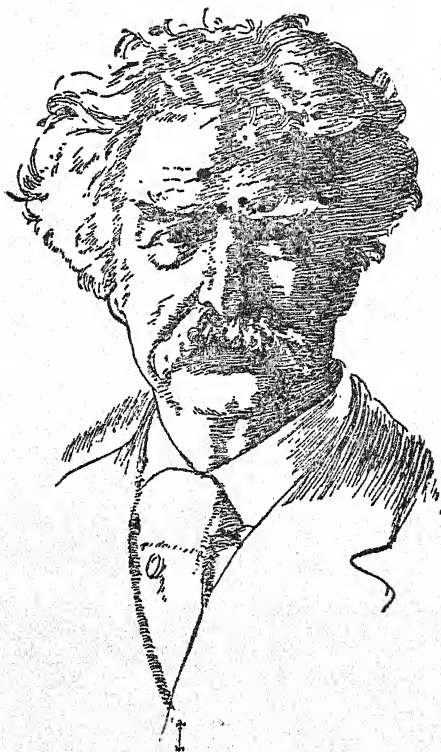


The Teaching of English Series

TWENTY-FOUR STORIES



U. G. C. Text Book  
Ewing Christian College,  
ALLAHABAD.



SAMUEL CLEMENS (MARK TWAIN)  
(From a pen-drawing by E. Heber Thompson)



# TWENTY-FOUR STORIES

Collected and Edited by  
A. E. M. BAYLISS, M.A.



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## INTRODUCTION

STORY-TELLING is as old as history itself and is one of the most sociable of the arts. But it is an art, and requires a certain skill in the narrator. A good story gains or loses much in the manner of the telling. If you doubt this you have only to stand in front of your class at school and relate an anecdote. Unless you exercise care, you will fail to interest your hearers. They may even miss the point because you do not make your meaning clear enough; and in a joke this is obviously disastrous. One of the most important rules to observe in telling a story is to select your details wisely. If you are recounting actual experiences you will find it is both unnecessary and inartistic to give the whole series of incidents just as they happened. Some of them can be omitted because they are irrelevant—that is, they have no real bearing upon the story and detract from the attention of your hearers. Others can be emphasized with advantage because they are essential to the point of your narrative. In other words, you will feel the need of arranging your facts in a certain way in order to secure balance. To make a story effective you must resist the temptation to say too much. There are too many people who cannot relate a simple occurrence without becoming long-winded, and it is just because they will not leave out unnecessary details that they bore their listeners to death. Tediousness is the unforgivable sin in tale-telling.

A story, like a play, should have a climax. As a rule the first part or introduction tells you just enough to interest you in the characters and the situation. Then the plot is gradually developed until a crisis is reached. Sometimes this brings the narrative to a sudden stop; but there is often more to follow. For example, in some mystery or detective tales, the solution is given after the climax so that you may be not only thrilled but intellectually satisfied. The same thing happens in the Shakespeare plays you have read and acted in school. Indeed, the short story and the drama resemble each other a good deal. In each you get plot, characterization, and description. But whereas in a play the characters speak for themselves, in ordinary narrative there may be no dialogue whatever, so you have to judge their personalities by the author's description and by the part they perform.

It is sometimes a habit with young readers to "skip" descriptive passages in a story. There is rarely any excuse for this, especially in short stories of the kind to be found in this book. You must not suppose that descriptions of people or places are unnecessary. Without them the full significance of a plot may be lost. The "setting" of a story, for example, in historical fiction is of the utmost importance. As you read and re-read these narratives it will be worth your while to study the pen-portraits of persons and animals and the details of scenery as well as the events recorded. Notice how the various authors make you see the characters and scenes—whether by elaborate explanation or by a few quick vivid touches of description. You will find it interesting, too, to compare those stories containing a great deal of dialogue with those that do not, and to judge in what circumstances conversation helps the writer to tell his story.

Some people like to classify the tales they read

according to whether the stress is laid upon action or character. Perhaps you will care to follow their example, but it is well to remember that all stories are really studies in character. True, a hero of fiction may be a man of action rather than words, but that only means that we judge his qualities by what he does rather than by what he says. The final result is the same. It is the human interest that counts. A good story makes us share the adventures of its hero, but it also enables us to share his feelings and obtain an insight into his motives for behaviour.

The idea of this collection is to supply you with a wide range of tales and episodes, so that you may have plenty of opportunities for comparison and contrast. Some of the items are complete short stories, while others are extracts from longer books which, it is hoped, you will be tempted to read from cover to cover in your spare time. The latter are not just snippets, however. They have a unity and a continuity of their own, and may be considered as possessing a certain completeness. Those that are already familiar to you will be worth reading again, for they are written by acknowledged masters in the art of fiction. And you will find that all of them will repay a close study on the lines I have mentioned. Amongst other things, you should notice how each writer begins and ends his story. Does he plunge at once into his subject, or does he prepare the way with a great deal of explanatory detail? Does he round off his narrative gradually, or bring it to a sudden dramatic stop? What use does he make of anticipation—or of surprise?

In order to give you the greatest possible variety, no author is represented more than once. You will observe that the "moderns" are put first. Perhaps you can guess why. If not, you will probably know the reason by the time you have finished the book. Don't



be in too great a hurry to get to the end. Allow yourselves the luxury of a good think over each story you read : you will get much more out of it that way. Then go and write one of your own, and joy go with you !

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# TWENTY-FOUR STORIES

## 1. THE SELFISH GIANT

(OSCAR WILDE)

EVERY afternoon, as they were coming from school the children used to go and play in the Giant's garden.

It was a large, lovely garden, with soft green grass. Here and there over the grass stood beautiful flowers like stars, and there were twelve peach-trees that in the springtime broke out into delicate blossoms of pink and pearl, and in the autumn bore rich fruit. The birds sat on the trees and sang so sweetly that the children used to stop their games in order to listen to them. "How happy we are here!" they cried to each other.

One day the Giant came back. He had been to visit his friend the Cornish ogre, and had stayed with him for seven years. After the seven years were over he had said all that he had to say, for his conversation was limited, and he determined to return to his own castle. When he arrived he saw the children playing in the garden.

"What are you doing there?" he cried in a very gruff voice, and the children ran away.

"My own garden is my own garden," said the Giant; "any one can understand that, and I will

allow nobody to play in it but myself." So he built a high wall all round it, and put up a notice-board :

TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED
--------------------------------------

He was a very selfish Giant.

The poor children had now nowhere to play. They tried to play on the road, but the road was very dusty and full of hard stones, and they did not like it. They used to wander round the high wall when their lessons were over, and talk about the beautiful garden inside. "How happy we were there," they said to each other.

Then the Spring came, and all over the country there were little blossoms and little birds. Only in the garden of the Selfish Giant it was still winter. The birds did not care to sing in it, as there were no children, and the trees forgot to blossom. Once a beautiful flower put its head out from the grass, but when it saw the notice-board it was so sorry for the children that it slipped back into the ground again, and went off to sleep. The only people who were pleased were the Snow and the Frost. "Spring has forgotten this garden," they cried, "so we will live here all the year round." The Snow covered up the grass with her great white cloak, and the Frost painted all the trees silver. Then they invited the North Wind to stay with them, and he came. He was wrapped in furs, and he roared all day about the garden, and blew the chimney-pots down. "This is a delightful spot," he said; "we must ask the Hail on a visit." So the Hail came. Every day for three hours he rattled on the roof of the castle till he broke most of the slates, and then he ran round and round the garden as fast as he

could go. He was dressed in grey, and his breath was like ice.

"I cannot understand why the Spring is so late in coming," said the Selfish Giant, as he sat at the window and looked out at his cold, white garden; "I hope there will be a change in the weather."

But the Spring never came, nor the Summer. The Autumn gave golden fruit to every garden, but to the Giant's garden she gave none. "He is too selfish," she said. So it was always Winter there, and the North Wind, and the Hail, and the Frost, and the Snow danced about through the trees.

One morning the Giant was lying awake in bed when he heard some lovely music. It sounded so sweet to his ears that he thought it must be the King's musicians passing by. It was really only a little linnet singing outside his window, but it was so long since he had heard a bird sing in his garden that it seemed to him to be the most beautiful music in the world. Then the Hail stopped dancing over his head, and the North Wind ceased roaring, and a delicious perfume came to him through the open casement. "I believe the Spring has come to last," said the Giant; and he jumped out of bed and looked out.

What did he see?

He saw a most wonderful sight. Through a little hole in the wall the children had crept in, and they were sitting in the branches of the trees. In every tree that he could see there was a little child. And the trees were so glad to have the children back again that they had covered themselves with blossoms, and were waving their arms gently above the children's heads. The birds were flying about and twittering with delight, and the flowers were looking up through the green grass and laughing. It was a lovely scene, only in one corner it was still winter. It was the farthest corner of the garden, and in it was standing a little boy. He was so small that he could not reach up to the

branches of the tree, and he was wandering all round it, crying bitterly. The poor tree was still quite covered with frost and snow, and the North Wind was blowing and roaring above it. "Climb up, little boy," said the Tree, and it bent its branches as low as it could; but the boy was too tiny.

And the Giant's heart melted as he looked out. "How selfish I have been!" he said; "now I know why the Spring would not come here. I will put that poor little boy on the top of the tree, and then I will knock down the wall, and my garden shall be the children's playground for ever and ever." He was really very sorry for what he had done.

So he crept downstairs and opened the front door quite softly, and went out into the garden. But when the children saw him they were so frightened that they all ran away, and the garden became winter again. Only the little boy did not run, for his eyes were so full of tears that he did not see the Giant coming. And the Giant stole up behind him and took him gently in his hand, and put him into the tree. And the tree broke at once into blossoms, and the birds came and sang on it, and the little boy stretched out his two arms and flung them round the Giant's neck and kissed him. And the other children, when they saw that the Giant was not wicked any longer, came running back, and with them came the Spring. "It is your garden now, little children," said the Giant, and he took a great axe and knocked down the wall. And when the people were going to market at twelve o'clock they found the Giant playing with the children in the most beautiful garden they had ever seen.

All day long they played, and in the evening they came to the Giant to bid him good-bye.

"But where is your little companion?" he said: "the boy I put into the tree." The Giant loved him the best because he had kissed him.

"We don't know," answered the children ; "he has gone away."

"You must tell him to be sure and come here to-morrow," said the Giant. But the children said that they did not know where he lived, and had never seen him before ; and the Giant felt very sad.

Every afternoon, when school was over, the children came and played with the Giant. But the little boy whom the Giant loved was never seen again. The Giant was very kind to all the children, yet he longed for his first little friend, and often spoke of him. "How I would like to see him !" he used to say.

Years went over, and the Giant grew very old and feeble. He could not play about any more, so he sat in a huge armchair and watched the children at their games, and admired his garden. "I have many beautiful flowers," he said ; "but the children are the most beautiful flowers of all."

One winter morning he looked out of his window as he was dressing. He did not hate the Winter now, for he knew that it was merely the Spring asleep, and that the flowers were resting.

Suddenly he rubbed his eyes in wonder, and looked and looked. It certainly was a marvellous sight. In the farthest corner of the garden was a tree quite covered with lovely white blossoms. Its branches were all golden, and silver fruit hung down from them, and underneath it stood the little boy he had loved.

Downstairs ran the Giant in great joy, and out into the garden. He hastened across the grass, and came near to the child. And when he came quite close his face grew red with anger, and he said, "Who hath dared to wound thee ?" For on the palms of the child's hands were the prints of two nails, and the prints of two nails were on the little feet.

"Who hath dared to wound thee ?" cried the Giant ; "tell me, that I may take my big sword and slay him."

"Nay!" answered the child; "but these are the wounds of Love."

"Who art thou?" said the Giant, and a strange awe fell on him, and he knelt before the little child.

And the child smiled on the Giant, and said to him, "You let me play once in your garden, to-day you shall come with me to my garden, which is Paradise."

And when the children ran in that afternoon, they found the Giant lying dead under the tree, all covered with white blossoms.

### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. This is one of the most beautiful fairy tales ever written. It is very simple, but not at all too childish for older people to enjoy. What is there unusual in the idea of the story?
2. There is very little description of the Giant—just a few touches here and there to remind you that he is one. Quote one or two examples.
3. As in most fairy tales, other creatures besides human beings are made to speak. Things are *personified*. What personifications are used here? In what other kinds of story does the same thing happen?
4. The ending—is it really sad?
5. How does this tale arouse your sympathy?

## 2. THE ENGLISHMAN

(JOHN BUCHAN)

THE little hut among the oak trees was dim in the October twilight on the evening of St. Callixtus' Day. It had been used by swineherds, for the earthen floor was puddled by the feet of generations of hogs, and in the corner lay piles of rotting acorns. Outside the mist had filled the forest, and the ways were muffled

with fallen leaves, so that the four men who approached the place came as stealthily as shades.

They reconnoitred a moment at the entrance, for it was a country of war.

"Quarters for the night," said one, and put his shoulder to the door of oak toppings hinged on strips of cowhide.

But he had not taken a step inside before he hastily withdrew.

"There is something there," he cried—"something that breathes. A light, Gil."

One of the four lit a lantern from his flint and poked it within. It revealed the foul floor and the rotting acorns, and in the far corner, on a bed of withered boughs, something dark which might be a man. They stood still and listened. There was the sound of painful breathing, and then the gasp with which a sick man awakens. A figure disengaged itself from the shadows. Seeing it was but one man, the four pushed inside, and the last pulled the door to behind him.

"What have we here?" the leader cried. A man had dragged himself to his feet, a short, square fellow, who held himself erect with a grip on a side-post. His eyes were vacant, dazzled by the light and also by pain. He seemed to have had hard usage that day, for his shaggy locks were matted with blood from a sword-cut above his forehead, one arm hung limp, and his tunic was torn and gashed. He had no weapons but a knife, which he held blade upwards in the hollow of his big hand.

The four who confronted him were as ill-looking a quartet as Duke William's motley host could show. One, the leader, was an unfrocked priest of Rouen; one was a hedge-robber from the western marches who had followed Alan of Brittany; a third had the olive cheeks and the long nose of the south; and the fourth was a heavy German from beyond the Rhine. They



were the kites that batten on the offal of war, and the great battle on the seashore having been won by better men, were creeping into the conquered land for the firstfruits of its plunder.

"An English porker," cried the leader. "We will have the tusks off him." Indeed, in the wild light the wounded man, with his flat face and forked beard, had the look of a boar cornered by hounds.

"Ware his teeth," said the one they called Gil. "He has a knife in his trotter."

The evil faces of the four were growing merry. They were worthless soldiers, but adepts in murder. Loot was their first thought, but after that furtive slaying. There seemed nothing to rob here, but there was weak flesh to make sport of.

Gil warily crept on one side, where he held his spear ready. The ex-priest, who had picked up somewhere a round English buckler, gave the orders. "I will run in on him and take his stroke, so you be ready to close. There is nothing to be feared from the swine. See, he is blooded and faints."

The lantern had been set on the ground by the door and revealed only the lower limbs of the four. Their heads were murky in shadow. Their speech was foreign to the wounded man, but he saw their purpose. He was clearly foredone with pain, but his vacant eyes kindled to slow anger, and he shook back his hair so that the bleeding broke out again on his forehead. He was as silent as an old tusker at bay.

The ex-priest gave the word, and the four closed in on him. He defeated their plan by hurling himself on the leader's shield, so that his weight bore him backwards and he could not use his weapon. The spears on the flanks failed for the same reason, and the two men posted there had wellnigh been the death of each other. The fourth, the one from the south, whose business it had been to support the priest, tripped, and fell sprawling beside the lantern.



The Englishman had one arm round the priest's neck and was squeezing the breath out of him. But the blood of the four was kindling, and they had vengeance instead of sport to seek. Mouthing curses, the three of them went to the rescue of the leader, and a weaponless and sore-wounded man cannot strive with such odds. They overpowered him, bending his arms viciously back and kicking his broken head. Their oaths filled the hut with an ugly clamour, but no sound came from their victim.

Suddenly a gust of air set the lantern flickering, and a new-comer stood in the doorway. He picked up the light and looked down on the struggle. He was a tall, very lean man, smooth-faced and black-haired, helmetless and shieldless, but wearing the plated hauberk of the soldier. There was no scabbard on his left side, but his right hand held a long bright sword.

For a second he lifted the light high, while he took in the scene. His eyes were dark and dancing, like the ripples on a peat stream. "So-ho!" he said softly. "Murder! And by our own vermin!"

He appeared to brood for a second, and then he acted. For he set the light very carefully in the crook of a joist so that it illumined the whole hut. Then he reached out a hand, plucked the ex-priest from his quarry, and swinging him in both arms, tossed him through the door into the darkness. It would seem that he fell hard, for there was a groan and then silence.

"One less," he said softly.

The three had turned to face him, warned by Gil's exclamation, and found themselves looking at the ominous bar of light which was his sword. Cornered like rats, they took small comfort from the odds. They were ready to surrender, still readier to run, and they stood on their defence with no fright in their faces, whining in their several patois. All but the man from the south. He was creeping round in the darkness by

the walls, and had in his hand a knife. No mailed hauberk protected the interloper's back, and there was a space there for steel to quiver between his shoulder-blades.

The new-comer did not see, but the eyes of the wounded man seemed to have been cleared by the scuffle. He was now free, and from the floor he snatched the round shield which the ex-priest had carried, and hurled it straight at the creeping miscreant. It was a heavy oaken thing with rim and boss of iron, and it caught him fairly above the ear, so that he dropped like a poled ox. The stranger turned his head to see what was happening. "A lucky shot, friend," he cried. "I thank you." And he addressed himself to the two pitiful bandits who remained.

But their eyes were looking beyond him to the door, and their jaws had dropped in terror. For from outside came the sound of horses' hooves and bridles, and two riders had dismounted and were peering into the hut. The first was a very mountain of a man, whose conical helmet surmounted a vast pale face, on which blond moustaches hung like the teeth of a walrus. The said helmet was grievously battered, and the nose-piece was awry as if from some fierce blow, but there was no scar on the skin. His long hauberk was wrought in scales of steel and silver, and the fillets which bound his great legs were of fine red leather. Behind him came a grizzled squire, bearing a kite-shaped shield painted with the cognizance of a dove.

"What have we here?" said the knight, in a reedy voice like a boy's. His pale eyes contemplated the figures—the wounded man, now faint again with pain and half fallen on the litter of branches; his deliverer, tall and grim, but with laughing face; the two murderers cringing in their fear; in a corner the huddled body of the man from the south half hidden by the shield. "Speak, fellow," and he addressed the soldier.

"What work has been toward? Have you not had your bellyful of battles that you must scabble like rats in this hovel? What are you called, and whence come you?"

The soldier lifted his brow, looked his questioner full in the face, and, as if liking what he found there, bowed his head in respect. The huge man had the air of one to be obeyed.

"I am of the Duke's army," he said, "and was sent on to reconnoitre the forest roads. I stumbled on this hut, and found four men about to slay a wounded English. One lies outside where I flung him, another is there with a cracked skull, and you have before you the remnant."

The knight seemed to consider. "And why should a soldier of the Duke's be so careful of English lives?" he asked.

"I would help my lord Duke to conquer this land," was the answer. "We have broken their army and the way is straight before us. We shall have to fight other armies, but we cannot be fighting all our days, and we do not conquer England till England accepts us. I have heard enough of that stubborn people to know that the way to win them is not by murder. A fair fight, and then honest dealing and mercy, say I."

The knight laughed. "A Solomon in judgment," he cried. "But who are you that bear a sword and wear gold on your finger?"

The old squire broke in. "My lord Count, I know the man. He is a hunter of the Lord Odo's, and has a name for valour. He wrought mightily this morning in the hill. They call him Jehan the Hunter, and sometimes Jehan the Outborn, for no man knows his comings. There is a rumour that he is of high blood, and truly in battle he bears himself like a prince. The monks loved him not, but the Lord Odo favoured him."

The knight looked steadily for the space of a moment

at the tall soldier, and his light eyes seemed to read deep. "Are you that man?" he asked at last, and got the reply: "I am Jehan the Hunter."

"Bid my fellows attend to yon scum," he told his squire. "The camp marshal will have fruit for his gallows. The sweepings of all Europe have drifted with us to England, and it is our business to make bonfire of them before they breed a plague. . . . See to the wounded man, likewise. He may be one of the stout house-carles who fought with Harold at Stamford, and to meet us raced like a gale through the length of England. By the the Mount of the Archangel, I would fain win such mettle to our cause."

Presently the hut was empty save for the two soldiers, who faced each other while the lantern flickered to its end on the rafters.

"The good Odo is dead," said the knight. "An arrow in the left eye has bereft our Duke of a noble ally and increased the blessedness of the City of Paradise. You are masterless now. Will you ride with me on my service, you, Jehan the Hunter? It would appear that we are alike in our ways of thinking. They call me the Dove from the shield I bear, and a dove I seek to be in the winning of England. The hawk's task is over when the battle is won, and he who has but the sword for weapon is no hawk, but carrion-crow. We have to set our Duke on the throne, but that is but the first step. There are more battles before us, and when they are ended begins the slow task of the conquest of English hearts. How say you, Jehan? Will you ride north with me on this errand, and out of the lands which are granted me to govern have a corner on which to practise your creed?"

So it befell that Jehan the Hunter, sometimes called Jehan the Outborn, joined the company of Ivo of Dives, and followed him when Duke William swept northward laughing his gross jolly laughter and swearing terribly by the splendour of God.

## COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. "We none of us know our ancestors beyond a little way. We all of us may have kings' blood in our veins." Such is the idea running through *The Path of the King*, the book in which this adventure appears. It is a series of chapters from history, illustrating that noble spirit which flourishes at all times, even in the most unlikely places. "I saw the younger sons carry the royal blood far down among the people, down even into the kennels of the outcast."  
How is the above idea worked out in the story printed here?
2. The hero calls the four villains "vermin." How far is he justified in doing so? What other epithets are applied to them?
3. What references help you to put this story in its proper historical setting?
4. Would you call it a "thriller"?
5. Describe briefly one of the characters mentioned.
6. What was it in Jehan that attracted Ivo of Dives?

## 3. A WHALING ADVENTURE

(FRANK T. BULLEN)

THROUGH all the vicissitudes of this strange voyage I had hitherto felt pretty safe, and as the last thing a man anticipates (if his digestion is all right) is the possibility of coming to grief himself, while fully prepared to see everybody else go under, so I had got to think that whoever got killed I was not to be—a very pleasing sentiment, and one that carries a man far, enabling him to face dangers with a light heart which otherwise would make a nerveless animal of him.

In this optimistic mood, then, I gaily flung myself

into my place in the mate's boat one morning, as we were departing in chase of a magnificent cachalot that had been raised just after breakfast. There were no other vessels in sight—much to our satisfaction—the wind was light, with a cloudless sky, and the whale was dead to leeward of us. We sped along at a good rate towards our prospective victim, who was, in his leisurely enjoyment of life, calmly lolling on the surface, occasionally lifting his enormous tail out of water and letting it fall flat upon the surface with a boom audible for miles.

We were, as usual, first boat ; but, much to the mate's annoyance, when we were a short half-mile from the whale, our main-sheet parted. It became immediately necessary to roll the sail up, lest its flapping should alarm the watchful monster, and this delayed us sufficiently to allow the other boats to shoot ahead of us. Thus the second mate got fast some seconds before we arrived on the scene, seeing which we furled sail, unshipped the mast, and went in on him with the oars only. At first the proceedings were quite of the usual character, our chief wielding his lance in most brilliant fashion, while not being fast to the animal allowed us much greater freedom in our evolutions ; but that fatal habit of the mate's—of allowing his boat to take care of herself so long as he was getting in some good home-thrusts—once more asserted itself. Although the whale was exceedingly vigorous, churning the sea into yeasty foam over an enormous area, there we wallowed close to him, right in the middle of the turmoil, actually courting disaster.

He had just settled down for a moment, when, glancing over the gunwale, I saw his tail, like a vast shadow, sweeping away from us towards the second mate, who was laying off the other side of him. Before I had time to think, the mighty mass of gristle leapt into the sunshine, curved back from us like a huge bow.



Then with a roar it came at us, released from its tension of Heaven knows how many tons. Full on the broadside it struck us, sending every soul but me flying out of the wreckage as if fired from catapults. I did not go because my foot was jammed somehow in the well of the boat, but the wrench nearly pulled my thigh-bone out of its socket. I had hardly released my foot, when, towering above me, came the colossal head of the great creature, as he ploughed through the bundle of débris that had just been a boat. There was an appalling roar of water in my ears, and darkness that might be felt all around. Yet, in the midst of it all, one thought predominated as clearly as if I had been turning it over in my mind in the quiet of my bunk aboard—"What if he should swallow me?"

Nor to this day can I understand how I escaped the portals of his gullet, which of course gaped wide as a church door. But the agony of holding my breath soon overpowered every other feeling and thought, till, just as something was going to snap inside my head, I rose to the surface. I was surrounded by a welter of bloody froth, which made it impossible for me to see; but oh, the air was sweet!

I struck out blindly, instinctively, although I could feel so strong an eddy that voluntary progress was out of the question. My hand touched and clung to a rope, which immediately towed me in some direction—I neither knew nor cared whither. Soon the motion ceased, and, with a seaman's instinct, I began to haul myself along by the rope I grasped, although no definite idea was in my mind as to where it was attached. Presently I came butt up against something solid, the feel of which gathered all my scattered wits into a compact knob of dread. It was the whale! "Any port in a storm." I murmured, beginning to haul away again on my friendly line. By dint of hard work I pulled myself right up the sloping, slippery bank of blubber, until I reached the iron, which, as luck would

have it, was planted in that side of the carcass now uppermost. Carcass I said—well, certainly I had no idea of there being any life remaining within the vast mass beneath me; yet I had hardly time to take a couple of turns round myself with the rope (or whale-line, as I had proved it to be), when I felt the great animal quiver all over, and begin to forge ahead. I was now composed enough to remember that help could not be far away, and that my rescue, providing that I could keep above water, was but a question of a few minutes. But I was hardly prepared for the whale's next move. Being very near his end, the boat, or boats, had drawn off a bit, I supposed, for I could see nothing of them. Then I remembered the flurry. Almost at the same moment it began; and there was I, who with fearful admiration had so often watched the titanic convulsions of a dying cachalot, actually involved in them. The turns were off my body, but I was able to twist a couple of turns round my arms, which, in case of his sounding, I could readily let go.

Then all was lost in roar and rush, as of the heart of some mighty cataract, during which I was sometimes above, sometimes beneath, the water, but always clinging, with every ounce of energy still left, to the line. Now, one thought was uppermost—"What if he should breach?" I had seen them do so when in flurry, leaping full twenty feet in the air. Then I prayed.

Quickly as all the preceding changes had passed came perfect peace. There I lay, still alive, but so weak that although I could feel the turns slipping off my arms, and knew that I should slide off the slope of the whale's side into the sea if they did, I could make no effort to secure myself. Everything then passed away from me, just as if I had gone to sleep.

I do not at all understand how I kept my position, nor how long, but I awoke to the blessed sound of



voices, and saw the second mate's boat alongside. Very gently and tenderly they lifted me into the boat, although I could hardly help screaming with agony when they touched me, so bruised and broken up did I feel. My arms must have been nearly torn from their sockets, for the strands of the whale-line had cut deep into their flesh with the strain upon it, while my thigh was swollen enormously from the blow I received at the onset. Mr. Cruce was the most surprised man I think I ever saw. For full ten minutes he stared at me with wide-open eyes. When at last he spoke, it was with difficulty, as if wanting words to express his astonishment. At last he blurted out, "Whar you bin all de time, ennyhaow? 'Cawse ef you bin hangin' on to dat ar wale ev' sence you boat smash, w'y de debbil you hain't all ter bits, hey?" I smiled feebly, but was too weak to talk, and presently went off again into a dead faint.

When I recovered, I was snug in my bunk aboard, but aching in every joint, and as sore as if I had been pounded with a club until I was bruised all over.

### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

This incident is taken from a book called *The Cruise of the "Cachalot,"* which gives an account of the cruise of a South Sea whaler from the seaman's standpoint, and so tells you all about the disadvantages as well as the romantic side of whale fishing.

A famous writer, of whom you have doubtless heard—Mr. Rudyard Kipling—said that he had never read anything to equal this story in its deep-sea woncer and mystery.

Perhaps when you have tried it for yourselves, you will agree with him; meanwhile:

1. How does the author give you the impression of the enormous size and strength of the whale?
2. Read the story carefully so as to be able to explain the meaning of *flurry*, *breach*.

3. What was "the fatal mistake" that caused the disaster?
4. Try to explain how the author managed to escape with his life.
5. Write down a few phrases that seem to you vividly descriptive.
6. What nautical terms would you explain to a younger reader to insure his understanding of the story?

#### 4. OUR LADY'S JUGGLER

(ANATOLE FRANCE)

IN the days of King Louis there lived a poor juggler by the name of Barnabas, a native of Compiègne, who wandered from city to city performing tricks of skill and prowess.

On fair days he would lay down in the public square a worn and aged carpet, and after having attracted a group of children and idlers by certain amusing remarks which he had learned from an old juggler, and which he invariably repeated in the same fashion without altering a word, he would assume the strangest postures, and balance a pewter plate on the tip of his nose. At first the crowd regarded him with indifference, but when, with his hands and head on the ground, he threw into the air and caught with his feet six copper balls that glittered in the sunlight, or when, throwing himself back until his neck touched his heels, he assumed the form of a perfect wheel and in that position juggled with twelve knives, he elicited a murmur of admiration from his audience, and small coins rained on his carpet.

Still, Barnabas of Compiègne, like most of those who exist by their accomplishments, had a hard time making a living. Earning his bread by the sweat of

his brow, he bore rather more than his share of those miseries we are all heir to through the fault of our Father Adam.

Besides, he was unable to work as much as he would have liked, for in order to exhibit his wonderful talents, he required—like the trees—the warmth of the sun and the heat of the day. In winter-time he was no more than a tree stripped of its leaves, in fact, half-dead. The frozen earth was too hard for the juggler. Like the cicada mentioned by Marie de France, he suffered during the bad season from hunger and cold. But, since he had a simple heart, he suffered in silence.

He had never thought much about the origin of wealth nor about the inequality of human conditions. He firmly believed that if this world was evil the next could not but be good, and this faith upheld him. . . . He was a good man, fearing God, and devout in his adoration of the Holy Virgin. When he went into a church he never failed to kneel before the image of the Mother of God and to address her with this prayer :

"My Lady, watch over my life until it shall please God that I die, and when I am dead, see that I have the joys of Paradise."

One evening, after a day of rain, as he walked sad and bent with his juggling balls under his arm and his knives wrapped up in his old carpet seeking some barn where he might go supperless to bed, he saw a monk going in his direction, and respectfully saluted him. As they were both walking at the same pace, they fell into conversation.

"Friend," said the monk, "how does it happen that you are dressed all in green? Are you perchance going to play the part of the fool in some mystery?"

"No, indeed, father," said Barnabas. "My name is Barnabas, and my business is that of a juggler. It

would be the finest calling in the world if I could eat every day."

"Friend Barnabas," answered the monk, "be careful what you say. There is no finer calling than the monastic. The priest celebrates the praise of God, the Virgin, and the saints; the life of a monk is a perpetual hymn to the Lord."

And Barnabas replied: "Father, I confess I spoke like an ignorant man. My estate cannot be compared to yours, and though there may be some merit in dancing and balancing a stick with a denier on top of it on the end of your nose, it is in no wise comparable to your merit. Father, I wish I might, like you, sing the Office every day, especially the Office of the Very Holy Virgin, to whom I am specially and piously devoted. I would willingly give up the art by which I am known from Soissons to Beauvais, in more than six hundred cities and villages, in order to enter the monastic life."

The monk was touched by the simplicity of the juggler, and as he was not lacking in discernment, he recognized in Barnabas one of those well-disposed men of whom our Lord has said, "Let peace be with them on earth." And he made answer therefore—

"Friend Barnabas, come with me and I will see that you enter the monastery of which I am the Prior. He who led Mary the Egyptian through the desert put me across your path in order that I might lead you to salvation."

Thus did Barnabas become a monk. In the monastery which he entered, the monks celebrated most magnificently the cult of the Holy Virgin, each of them bringing to her service all the knowledge and skill which God had given him.

The Prior, for his part, wrote books, setting forth, according to the rules of scholasticism, all the virtues of the Mother of God. Brother Maurice copied these treatises with a cunning hand on pages of parchment,

while Brother Alexandre decorated them with delicate miniatures representing the Queen of Heaven seated on the throne of Solomon, with four lions on guard at the foot of it. Around her head, which was encircled by a halo, flew seven doves, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: fear, piety, knowledge, power, judgment, intelligence, and wisdom. With her were six golden-haired virgins: Humility, Prudence, Retirement, Respect, Virginity, and Obedience. . . .

Brother Marbode, too, was one of the cherished children of Mary. He was ever busy cutting images of stone, so that his beard, his eyebrows, and his hair were white with the dust, and his eyes perpetually swollen and full of tears. But he was a hardy and a happy man in his old age, and there was no doubt that the Queen of Paradise watched over the declining days of Her child. Marbode represented Her seated in a pulpit, Her forehead encircled by a halo, with an orb of pearls. He was at great pains to make the folds of Her robe cover the feet of Her of whom the prophet has said, "My beloved is like a closed garden."

At times he represented Her as a graceful child, and Her image seemed to say, "Lord, Thou art My Lord!"

There were also in the Monastery poets who composed prose writings in Latin and hymns in honour of the Most Gracious Virgin Mary; there was, indeed, one among them—a Picard—who translated the Miracles of Our Lady into rimed verses in the vulgar tongue.

Perceiving so great a competition in praise, and so fine a harvest of good works, Barnabas fell to lamenting his ignorance and simplicity.

"Alas!" he sighed as he walked by himself one day in the little garden shaded by the Monastery wall, "I am so unhappy because I cannot, like my brothers, give worthy praise to the Mother of God to whom I

have consecrated all the love in my heart. Alas, I am a stupid fellow, without art, and for your service, Madame, I have no edifying sermons, no fine treatises nicely prepared according to the rules, no beautiful paintings, no cunningly carved statues, and no verses counted off by feet and marching in measure ! Alas, I have nothing !”

Thus did he lament and abandon himself to his misery.

One evening when the monks were talking together by way of diversion, he heard one of them tell of a monk who could not recite anything but the *Ave Maria*. He was scorned for his ignorance, but after he died there sprang from his mouth five roses, in honour of the five letters in the name Maria. Thus was his holiness made manifest.

In listening to this story, Barnabas was conscious once more of the Virgin's beneficence, but he was not consoled by the example of the happy miracle, for his heart was full of zeal and he wanted to celebrate the glory of His Lady in Heaven.

He sought for a way in which to do this, but in vain, and each day brought him greater sorrow, until one morning he sprang joyously from his cot and ran to the chapel, where he remained alone for more than an hour. He returned thither again after dinner, and from that day onward he would go into the chapel every day the moment it was deserted, passing the greater part of the time which the other monks dedicated to the pursuit of the liberal arts and the sciences. He was no longer sad and he sighed no more. But such singular conduct aroused the curiosity of the other monks, and they asked themselves why Brother Barnabas retired alone so often, and the Prior, whose business it was to know everything that his monks were doing, determined to observe Barnabas. One day, therefore, when Barnabas was alone in the chapel, the Prior entered in company with two of the oldest



brothers, in order to watch, through the bars of the door, what was going on within.

They saw Barnabas before the image of the Holy Virgin, his head on the floor and his feet in the air, juggling with six copper balls and twelve knives. In honour of the Holy Virgin he was performing the tricks which had in former days brought him the greatest fame. Not understanding that he was thus putting his best talents at the service of the Holy Virgin, the aged brothers cried out against such sacrilege. The Prior knew that Barnabas had a simple soul, but he believed that the man had lost his wits. All three set about to remove Barnabas from the chapel, when they saw the Virgin slowly descend from the altar and, with a fold of her blue mantle, wipe the sweat that streamed over the juggler's forehead.

Then the Prior, bowing his head down to the marble floor, repeated these words :

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

"Amen," echoed the brothers, bowing down to the floor.

#### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. This story is by a famous French author who died not long ago. How could you guess it was not written by an Englishman?
2. What is the key-note of Barnabas's character, and how is the story made to hinge upon it?
3. Would you call this a simple tale? If not, where does the difficulty lie?
4. Why could the Prior be described as "the right man in the right place"?
5. Compare this story with "The Selfish Giant." Are the heroes at all alike?
6. Does any *parable* contain the same idea?

## 5. THE GRIP OF THE LAW

(ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE)

THE road along which he travelled was scarce as populous as most other roads in the kingdom, and far less so than those which lie between the larger towns. Yet from time to time Alleyne met other wayfarers, and more than once was overtaken by strings of pack-mules and horsemen journeying in the same direction as himself. Once a begging friar came limping along in a brown habit, imploring him in a most dolorous voice to give him a single groat to buy bread wherewith to save himself from impending death. Alleyne passed him swiftly by, for he had learned from the monks to have no love for the wandering friars, and, besides, there was a great, half-gnawed mutton-bone sticking out of his pouch to prove him a liar. Swiftly as he went, however, he could not escape the curse of the four blessed Evangelists which the mendicant howled behind him. So dreadful were his execrations that the frightened lad thrust his fingers into his ear-holes, and ran until the fellow was but a brown smirch upon the yellow road.

Farther on, at the edge of the woodland, he came upon a chapman and his wife, who sat upon a fallen tree. He had put his pack down as a table, and the two of them were devouring a great pasty, and washing it down with some drink from a stone jar. The chapman broke a rough jest as he passed, and the woman called shrilly to Alleyne to come and join them, on which the man, turning suddenly from mirth to wrath, began to belabour her with his cudgel. Alleyne hastened on, lest he make more mischief, and his heart was heavy as lead within him. Look where he would,



he seemed to see nothing but injustice and violence, and the hardness of man to man.

But even as he brooded sadly over it, and pined for the sweet peace of the Abbey, he came on an open space dotted with holly-bushes, where was the strangest sight that he had yet chanced upon. Near to the pathway lay a long clump of greenery, and from behind this there stuck straight up into the air four human legs clad in parti-coloured hosen, yellow and black. Strangest of all was it when a brisk tune struck suddenly up and the four legs began to kick and twitter in time to the music. Walking on tiptoe round the bushes, he stood in amazement to see two men bounding about on their heads, while they played, the one a viol and the other a pipe, as merrily and as truly as though they were seated in choir. Alleyne crossed himself as he gazed at this unnatural sight, and could scarce hold his ground with a steady face, when the two dancers, catching sight of him, came bouncing in his direction. A spear's length from him they each threw a somersault into the air, and came down upon their feet with smirking faces and their hands over their hearts.

"A guerdon—a guerdon, my knight of the staring eyes!" cried one.

"A gift, my prince!" shouted the other. "Any trifle will serve—a purse of gold, or even a jewelled goblet."

Alleyne thought of what he had read of demoniac possession—the jumpings, the twitchings, the wild talk. It was in his mind to repeat over the exorcism proper to such attacks; but the two burst out laughing at his scared face, and, turning on to their heads once more, clapped their heels in derision.

"Hast never seen tumblers before?" asked the elder, a black-browed, swarthy man, as brown and supple as a hazel-twig. "Why shrink from us, then, as though we were the spawn of the Evil One?"

"Why shrink, my honey-bird? Why so afeard, my sweet cinnamon?" exclaimed the other, a loose-jointed lanky youth with a dancing roguish eye.

"Truly, sirs, it is a new sight to me," the clerk answered. "When I saw your four legs above the bush I could scarce credit my own eyes. Why is it that you do this thing?"

"A dry question to answer," cried the younger, coming back on to his feet. "A most husky question, my fair bird! But how? A flask, a flask!—by all that is wonderful!" He shot out his hand as he spoke, and plucking Alleyne's bottle out of his scrip, he deftly knocked the neck off, and poured the half of it down his throat. The rest he handed to his comrade, who drank the wine, and then, to the clerk's increasing amazement, made a show of swallowing the bottle, with such skill that Alleyne seemed to see it vanish down his throat. A moment later, however, he flung it over his head, and caught it bottom downwards upon the calf of his left leg.

"We thank you for the wine, kind sir," said he, "and for the ready courtesy wherewith you offered it. Touching your question, we may tell you that we are strollers and jugglers, who, having performed with much applause at Winchester fair, are now on our way to the great Michaelmas market at Ringwood. As our art is a very fine and delicate one, however, we cannot let a day go by without exercising ourselves in it, to which end we choose some quiet and sheltered spot, where we may break our journey. Here you find us; and we cannot wonder that you, who are new to tumbling, should be astounded, since many great barons, earls, marshals, and knights, who have wandered as far as the Holy Land, are of one mind in saying that they have never seen a more noble or gracious performance. If you will be pleased to sit upon that stump, we will now continue our exercise."

Alleyne sat down willingly as directed, with two

great bundles on either side of him which contained the strollers' dresses—doublets of flame-coloured silk and girdles of leather, spangled with brass and tin. The jugglers were on their heads once more, bounding about with rigid necks, playing the while in perfect time and tune. It chanced that out of one of the bundles there stuck the end of what the clerk saw to be a cittern, so, drawing it forth, he tuned it up and twanged a harmony to the merry lilt which the dancers played. On that they dropped their own instruments, and putting their hands to the ground they hopped about faster and faster, ever shouting to him to play more briskly, until at last for very weariness all three had to stop.

"Well played, sweet poppet!" cried the younger. "Hast a rare touch on the strings."

"How knew you the tune?" asked the other.

"I knew it not. I did but follow the notes I heard."

Both opened their eyes at this, and stared at Alleyne with as much amazement as he had shown at them.

"You have a fine trick of ear, then," said one. "We have long wished to meet such a man. Wilt join us and jog on to Ringwood? Thy duties shall be light, and thou shalt have twopence a day and meat for supper every night."

"With as much beer as you can put away," said the other, "and a flask of Gascon wine on Sabbaths."

"Nay, it may not be. I have other work to do. I have tarried with you over long," quoth Alleyne, and resolutely set forth upon his journey once more. They ran behind him some little away, offering him first fourpence and then sixpence a day; but he only smiled and shook his head, until at last they fell away from him. Looking back, he saw that the smaller had mounted on the younger's shoulders, and that they stood so, some ten feet high, waving their adieus to him. He waved back to them, and then hastened on,

the lighter of heart for having fallen in with these strange men of pleasure.

Alleyne had gone no great distance for all the many small passages that had befallen him. Yet to him, used as he was to a life of such quiet that the failure of a brewing, or the altering of an anthem, had seemed to be of the deepest import, the quick changing play of the lights and shadows of life was strangely startling and interesting. A gulf seemed to divide this brisk, uncertain existence from the old steady round of work and of prayer which he had left behind him. The few hours that had passed since he saw the Abbey tower stretched out in his memory until they outgrew whole months of the stagnant life of the cloister. As he walked and munched the soft bread from his scrip, it seemed strange to him to feel that it was still warm from the ovens of Beaulieu.

When he passed Penerley, where were three cottages and a barn, he reached the edge of the tree country, and found the great barren heath of Blackdown stretching in front of him, all pink with heather and bronzed with the fading ferns. On the left the woods were still thick, but the road edged away from them and wound over the open. The sun lay low in the west upon a purple cloud, whence it threw a mild chastening light over the wild moorland and glittered on the fringe of forest, turning the withered leaves into flakes of dead gold, the brighter for the black depths behind them. To the seeing eye decay is as fair as growth and death as life. The thought stole into Alleyne's heat as he looked upon the autumnal countryside and marvelled at its beauty. He had little time to dwell upon it, however, for there were still six good miles between him and the nearest inn. He sat down by the roadside to partake of his bread and cheese, and then with a lighter scrip he hastened upon his way.

There appeared to be more wayfarers on the down

than in the forest. First he passed two Dominicans in their long black dresses, who swept by him with downcast looks and pattering lips, without so much as a glance at him. Then there came a grey friar, or minorite, with a good paunch upon him, walking slowly and looking about him with the air of a man who was at peace with himself and with all men. He stopped Alleyne to ask him whether it were not true that there was a hostel somewhere in those parts which was especially famous for the stewing of eels. The clerk having made answer that he had heard the eels of Sowley well spoken of, the friar sucked in his lips and hurried forward. Close at his heel came three labourers walking abreast, with spade and mattock over their shoulders. They sang some rude chorus right tunelessly as they walked, but their English was so coarse and rough that to the ears of a cloister-bred man it sounded like a foreign and barbarous tongue. One of them carried a young bittern which they had caught upon the moor, and they offered it to Alleyne for a silver groat. Very glad he was to get safely past them, for, with their bristling red beards and their fierce blue eyes, they were uneasy men to bargain with upon a lonely moor.

Yet it is not always the burliest and the wildest who are the most to be dreaded. The workers looked hungrily at him, and then jogged onwards upon their way in slow, lumbering, Saxon style. A worse man to deal with was a wooden legged cripple who came hobbling down the path, so weak and so old to all appearance that a child need not stand in fear of him. Yet when Alleyne had passed him, of a sudden, out of pure devilment, he screamed out a curse at him, and sent a jagged flint-stone hurtling past his ear. So horrid was the causeless rage of the crooked creature, that the clerk came over a cold thrill, and took to his heels until he was out of shot from stone or word. It seemed to him that in this country of England there was no pro-

tection for a man save that which lay in the strength of his own arm and the speed of his own foot. In the cloisters he had heard vague talk of the law—the mighty law which was higher than prelate or baron, yet no sign could he see of it. What was the benefit of a law written fair upon parchment, he wondered, if there were no officers to enforce it? As it fell out, however, he had that very evening, ere the sun had set, a chance of seeing how stern was the grip of the English law when it did happen to seize the offender.

A mile or so out upon the moor the road takes a very sudden dip into a hollow, with a peat-coloured stream running swiftly down the centre of it. To the right of this stood, and stands to this day, an ancient barrow, or burying mound, covered deeply in a bristle of heather and bracken. Alleyne was plodding down the slope upon one side, when he saw an old dame coming towards him upon the other, limping with weariness and leaning heavily upon a strick. When she reached the edge of the stream she stood helpless, looking to right and to left for some ford. Where the path ran down a great stone had been fixed in the centre of the brook, but it was too far from the bank for her aged and uncertain feet. Twice she thrust forward at it, and twice she drew back, until at last, giving it up in despair, she sat herself down by the brink and wrung her hands wearily. There she still sat when Alleyne reached the crossing.

"Come, mother," quoth he, "it is not so very perilous a passage."

"Alas! good youth," she answered, "I have a humour in the eyes, and though I can see that there is a stone there, I can by no means be sure as to where it lies."

"That is easily amended," said he cheerily, and picking her lightly up, for she was much worn with time, he passed across with her. He could not but observe, however, that as he placed her down her knees



seemed to fail her, and she could scarcely prop herself up with her staff.

"You are weak, mother," said he. "Hast journeyed far, I wot."

"From Wiltshire, friend," said she, in a quavering voice; "three days have I been on the road. I go to my son, who is one of the king's regards at Brockenhurst. He has ever said that he would care for me in mine old age."

"And rightly, too, mother, since you cared for him in his youth. But when have you broken fast?"

"At Lydenhurst; but, alas! my money is at an end, and I could but get a dish of bran-porridge from the nunnery. Yet I trust that I may be able to reach Brockenhurst to-night, where I may have all that heart can desire; for, oh, sir! but my son is a fine man, with a kindly heart of his own, and it is as good as food to me to think that he should have a doublet of Lincoln-green to his back and be the king's own paid man."

"It is a long road yet to Brockenhurst," said Alleyne; "but here is such bread and cheese as I have left, and here, too, is a penny which may help you to supper. May God be with you!"

"May God be with you, young man!" she cried. "May He make your heart as glad as you have made mine!" She turned away, still mumbling blessings, and Alleyne saw her short figure and her long shadow stumbling slowly up the slope.

He was moving away himself, when his eyes lit upon a strange sight, and one which sent a tingling through his skin. Out of the tangled scrub on the old overgrown barrow two human faces were looking at him; the sinking sun glimmered full upon them, showing up every line and feature. The one was an oldish man with a thin beard, a crooked nose, and a broad red smudge from a birth-mark over his temple; the other was a negro, a thing rarely met in England at that day,



and rarer still in the quiet southland parts. Alleyne had read of such folk, but had never seen one before, and could scarce take his eyes from the fellow's broad pouting lip and shining teeth. Even as he gazed, however, the two came writhing out from among the heather, and came down towards him with such a guilty, slinking, carriage, that the clerk felt that there was no good in them, and hastened onwards upon his way.

He had not gained the crown of the slope, when he heard a sudden scuffle behind him, and a feeble voice bleating for help. Looking round, there was the old dame down upon the roadway, with her red wimple flying on the breeze, while the two rogues, black and white, stooped over her, wresting away from her the penny and such other poor trifles as were worth the taking. At the sight of her thin limbs struggling in weak resistance, such a glow of fierce anger passed over Alleyne as set his head in a whirl. Dropping his scrip, he bounded over the stream once more, and made for the two villains, with his staff whirled over his shoulder, and his grey eyes blazing with fury.

30780 The robbers, however, were not disposed to leave their victim until they had worked their wicked will upon her. The black man, with the woman's crimson scarf tied round his swarthy head, stood forward in the centre of the path, with a long dull-coloured knife in his hand, while the other, waving a ragged cudgel, cursed at Alleyne and dared him to come on. His blood was fairly aflame, however, and he needed no such challenge. Dashing at the black man, he smote at him with such good-will that he let his knife tinkle into the roadway, and hopped howling to a safer distance. The second rogue, however, made of sterner stuff, rushed in upon the clerk and clipped him round the waist with a grip like a bear, shouting the while to his comrade to come round and stab him in the back. At this the negro took heart of grace, and, picking up

his dagger again, he came stealing with prowling step and murderous eye, while the two swayed backwards and forwards, staggering this way and that. In the very midst of the scuffle, however, whilst Alleyne braced himself to feel the cold blade between his shoulders, there came a sudden scurry of hoofs, and the black man yelled with terror, and ran for his life through the heather. The man with the birth-mark, too, struggled to break away, and Alleyne heard his teeth chatter and felt his limbs grow limp to his hand. At this sign of coming aid the clerk held on the tighter, and at last was able to pin his man down and glance behind him to see whence all the noise was coming.

Down the slanting road there was riding a big burly man, clad in a tunic of purple velvet, and driving a great black horse as hard as it could gallop. He leaned well over its neck as he rode, and made a heaving with his shoulders at every bound as though he were lifting the steed instead of it carrying him. In the rapid glance Alleyne saw that he had white doe-skin gloves, a curling white feather in his flat velvet cap, and a broad gold-embroidered baldric across his bosom. Behind him rode six others, two and two, clad in sober brown jerkins, with the long yellow staves of their bows thrusting out from behind their right shoulders. Down the hill they thundered, over the brook, and up to the scene of the contest.

"Here is one!" said the leader, springing down from his reeking horse and seizing the white rogue by the edge of his jerkin. "This is one of them. I know him by that devil's touch upon his brow. Where are your cords, Peterkin? So! Bind him hand and foot. His last hour has come. And you, young man, who may you be?"

"I am a clerk, sir, travelling from Beaulieu."

"A clerk!" cried the other. "Art from Oxenford of from Cambridge? Hast thou a letter from the chancellor of thy college giving thee a permit to beg?"

Let me see thy letter." He had a stern square face, with bushy side-whiskers and a very questioning eye.

"I am from Beaulien Abbey, and I have no need to beg," said Alleyne, who was all of a tremble now that the ruffle was over.

"The better for thee," the other answered. "Dost know who I am?"

"No, sir, I do not."

"I am the law!"—nodding his head solemnly. "I am the law of England and the mouthpiece of his most gracious and royal majesty, Edward the Third."

Alleyne louted low to the king's representative.

"Truly you came in good time, honoured sir," said he. "A moment later and they would have slain me."

"But there should be another one," cried the man in the purple coat. "There should be a black man. A shipman with St. Anthony's fire, and a black man who had served him as cook—those are the pair that we are in chase of."

"The black man fled over to that side," said Alleyne, pointing towards the barrow.

"He could not have gone far, sir bailiff," cried one of the archers, unslinging his bow. "He is in hiding somewhere, for he knew well, black paynim as he is, that our horses' four legs could outstrip his two."

"Then we shall have him," said the other. "It shall never be said whilst I am Bailiff of Southampton, that any waster, riever, drawlatch or murderer came scathless away from me and my posse. Leave that rogue lying. Now stretch out in line, my merry ones, with arrow on string, and I shall show you such sport as only the king can give. You on the left, Howett, and Thomas of Redbridge upon the right. So! Beat high and low among the heather, and a pot of wine to the lucky marksman."

As it chanced, however, the searchers had not far to seek. The negro had burrowed down into his

hiding-place upon the barrow, where he might have lain snug enough had it not been for the red gear upon his head. As he raised himself to look over the bracken at his enemies, the staring colour caught the eye of the bailiff, who broke into a long screeching whoop and spurred forward sword in hand. Seeing himself discovered, the man rushed out from his hiding-place and bounded at the top of his speed down the line of archers, keeping a good hundred paces to the front of them. The two who were on either side of Alleyne bent their bows as calmly as though they were shooting at the popinjay at a village fair.

"Seven yards windage, Hal," said one, whose hair was streaked with grey.

"Five," replied the other, letting loose his string. Alleyne gave a gulp in his throat, for the yellow streak seemed to pass through the man; but he still ran forward.

"Seven, you jack-fool," growled the first speaker, and his bow twanged like a harpstring. The black man sprang high up into the air, and shot out both his arms and his legs, coming down all asprawl among the heather. "Right under the blade bone!" quoth the archer, sauntering forward for his arrow.

"The old hound is the best when all is said," quoth the Bailiff of Southampton, as they made back for the roadway. "That means a quart of the best malmsey in Southampton this very night, Matthew Atwood. Art sure that he is dead?"

"Dead as Pontius Pilate, worshipful sir."

"It is well. Now, as to the other knave. There are trees and to spare over yonder, but we have scarce leisure to make for them. Draw thy sword, Thomas of Redbridge, and hew me his head from his shoulders."

"A boon, gracious sir, a boon!" cried the condemned man.

"What then?" asked the bailiff

"I will confess to my crime. It was indeed I and

the black cook, both from the ship *La Rose de Gloire*, of Southampton, who did set upon the Flanders merchant and rob him of his spicery and his mercery, for which, as we well know, you hold a warrant against us."

"There is little merit in this confession," quoth the bailiff sternly. "Thou hast done evil within my bailiwick, and must die."

"But, sir," urged Alleyne, who was white to the lips at these bloody doings, "he hath not yet come to trial."

"Young clerk," said the bailiff, "you speak of that of which you know nothing. It is true that he hath not come to trial, but the trial hath come to him. He hath fled the law and is beyond its pale. Touch not that which is no concern of thine. But what is this boon, rogue, which you would crave?"

"I have in my shoe, most worshipful sir, a strip of wood which belonged once to the bark wherein the blessed Paul was dashed up against the island of Melita. I bought it for two rose nobles from a shipman who came from the Levant. The boon I crave is that you will place it in my hands and let me die still grasping it. In this manner, not only shall my own eternal salvation be secured, but thine also, for I shall never cease to intercede for thee."

At the command of the bailiff they plucked off the fellow's shoe, and there sure enough at the side of the instep, wrapped in a piece of fine sendal, lay a long dark splinter of wood. The archers doffed caps at the sight of it, and the bailiff crossed himself devoutly as he handed it to the robber.

"If it should chance," he said, "that through the surpassing merits of the blessed Paul your sin-stained soul should gain a way into paradise, I trust that you will not forget that intercession which you have promised. Bear in mind, too, that it is Herward the Bailiff for whom you pray, and not Herward the

Sheriff, who is my uncle's son. Now, Thomas, I pray you dispatch, for we have a long ride before us and sun has already set."

Alleyne gazed upon the scene—the portly velvet-clad official, the knot of hard-faced archers with their hands to the bridles of their horses, the thief with his arms trussed back and his doublet turned down upon his shoulders. By the side of the track the old dame was standing, fastening her red wimple once more round her head. Even as he looked one of the archers drew his sword with a sharp whirr of steel and stepped up to the lost man. The clerk hurried away in horror; but, ere he had gone many paces, he heard a sudden, sullen thump, with a choking, whistling sound at the end of it. A minute later the bailiff and four of his men rode past him on their journey back to Southampton, the other two having been chosen as gravediggers. As they passed, Alleyne saw that one of the men was wiping his sword-blade upon the mane of his horse. A deadly sickness came over him at the sight, and, sitting down by the wayside, he burst out a-weeping, with his nerves all in a jangle. It was a terrible world, thought he, and it was hard to know which were the more to be dreaded, the knaves or the men of the law.

#### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. If you like historical romances, you will enjoy *The White Company*, the book in which this episode occurs. With what period of history do you suppose it deals?
2. How does the end of the story correct the impression you probably form at the beginning?
3. What is the modern equivalent of a "tumbler"?
4. Why does Alleyne find travelling unusually interesting and dangerous?
5. What incidents help you to form some opinion of his character?



6. If you have read *The Cloister and the Hearth* what resemblances do you see between it and *The White Company*?
7. What were the duties of the bailiff?
8. Do you learn more about the hero's appearance or his character from this narrative?
9. Quote an example of picturesque description here.

## 6. GREEN PAINT

(J. J. BELL)

SO far Macgregor had spent a delightful evening, although at first he had felt the absence of his devoted chum, Willie Thomson, who, unfortunately, was confined to his home with a swollen face, the result, probably, of a soaking received the previous day while hanging on behind a Corporation watering-cart, which he and Macgregor had too hastily assumed to be empty. But Macgregor had speedily found a companion in Hughie Wilson, a boy whom he had hitherto rather despised, but who on this occasion had proved himself quite worthy of notice, having in his possession a pea-shooter and a fair quantity of appropriate ammunition. Hughie made no objection to sharing his sport with Macgregor, and by the time nearly all the peas were fired away—with more or less painful and irritating effect on pedestrians and owners of windows—or chewed and swallowed by the sharpshooters, the twain were on the best of terms, and all might have been well, had Macgregor only refrained from bragging of and exhibiting his athletic prowess. The competitions, which were begun in a spirit of friendly rivalry, ended in a very different spirit so far as Hughie was concerned, for he had to suffer defeat in everything he attempted, and, while hiding his



chagrin successfully enough, he was inwardly boiling with mortification and longing to discomfit his victor.

Macgregor, on the other hand, made no effort to conceal his elation.

"I tell't ye I wud bate ye," he said gleefully, as they walked away in the dusk at the end of the series of running and leaping trials.

"I'm no' heedin'," retorted Hughie, slipping a stray pea into his mouth. "Are ye gaun hame noo?"

"Ay," replied Macgregor, who had promised to be home by seven (it was now half-past that hour) to study his lessons. "But ye're no vera quick on yer feet, Hughie," he continued pleasantly. "I'll ha'e to gi'e ye a guid stairt the next time we try a race. Eh?"

"Och, I'm no' heedin' aboot racin', nor jumpin' either," said the other carelessly. "I jist done it to please ye."

"Fine ham! Ye're jist sayin' that because ye got bate. D'ye mind thon time when I jump near twicet as faur as yersel'? Eh? D'ye mind it?" Macgregor persisted.

"Naw!" said Hughie shortly.

"Ah, ye mind it fine!"

They walked several yards in silence, and Hughie said—

"Ye think ye're awfu' clever, but I'll bet ye onything ye like ye canna sclim a lamp-post."

"Whit's that ye're sayin'?"

"I'm sayin' ye canna sclim a lamp-post."

"Can I no'?" Macgregor cried. "I'll shin let ye see!"

"Weel, sclim thon yin," said Hughie, pointing to the lamp-post which they were approaching. "Speel up thon—if ye can!"

"I'll speel up it afore ye can whustle!" exclaimed the valiant one.

Hughie smiled, it might have been doubtingly.

"D'ye think I canna dae it?" roared Macgregor, thoroughly roused, flinging off his cap and jacket, and tossing them into a convenient entry.

Still smiling, Hughie edged away.

Macgregor spat lightly on his hands. "I'll shin let ye see!" he cried, advancing to the post.

At the moment he gripped it with hands and knees Hughie burst into a jeering laugh and, turning, bolted up the entry. But, as luck would have it, he tripped over his companion's jacket and fell; and the next instant Macgregor was on the top of him, kneeling on his back.

"Ye kent the pent wisna dry," Macgregor cried, half choked with rage. "I'll give ye the best bashin' ye ever —"

"Aw—aw! Let me alane," howled the other, struggling desperately, and vainly endeavouring to protect his face and hair from the sticky, green hands.

"Ye kent it wis wat pent," retorted Macgregor, with a vicious rub at an exposed patch of cheek.

"I didna! The—the man maun ha'e ta'en the ticket aff ower shin. It wis there the day."

"Wis't? Aweel, ye *thocht* it wud be wat yet."

"Aw, ma nose!" yelled the victim, as that organ received a smear. "I'll tell ma big brither on ye, and he'll —"

"Ye're to get a bashin' first. Ye'll get it as shin as I clean my haun's on ye, *There!* . . . an' *there!* . . . an' —"

A door close at hand opened, and a very respectable elderly woman appeared on the scene.

"Mercy me!" she exclaimed, horrified, "are ye fechtin', ye bad boys? Stop it this instant!"

Hughie redoubled his cries, but Macgregor continued his operations, totally regardless of the intruder.

"Oh, me!" groaned the old lady. "I wish ma

man wis in the hoose. . . . Stop fechtin', like guid boys, if ye please," she implored, laying her hand on Macgregor's shoulder.

"Awa' an' bile yer heid!" was his rude command.

"He's killin' me," wailed Hughie.

Driven to desperation, she stooped and captured one of Macgregor's hands, whereupon the victim wriggled himself free, and rose to his feet, exhibiting so fearsome a visage that the would-be peacemaker cried out in horror and let go the victor. Before she realized the condition of her own fingers and the wrist of one of her sleeves, she was alone, and Macgregor was in hot pursuit of Hughie. The latter, however, in this instance, won the race, reaching home a woeful and grotesque object.

Having given up the chase at the last moment, Macgregor returned, almost satisfied with his revenge, to the entry for his cap and jacket. It was not till he had recovered his property, which he did before his breath, that his attention was attracted to the condition of his knickerbockers. Even in the feeble lamp-light the damage looked very, very serious, though it was confined to the cloth on the inner sides of his knees. The knickerbockers, too, were comparatively new, and he had put them on that afternoon to allow of his mother making some repairs upon his everyday ones. He remembered that she had warned him to be careful as to what games he played, and the flush of his recent excitement gave way before a chill of remorse and foreboding.

Although his home was just round the corner, it was nearly half an hour later ere he knocked at the door and was admitted by his mother.

"Ye've been ower lang ootbye, laddie," she said a little reproachfully, but not crossly. "Ye sudna fureget the time when ye've yer lessons to learn. Is that pent I smell on ye?"

"It—it wis on ma haun's, but it's near a' aff," he

returned, keeping his knees well together and exhibiting his palms. Fortunately it was not very light in the little lobby.

"Weel, I'm gled ye didna file yer claes, Macgregor. Awa' an' wash yer haun's an' then get stairtit to yer lessons. Ye'll never be dux if ye gang on like this."

Had her son been in his usual spirits, he would probably have retorted that he did not want to be dux, but on this occasion he followed her into the kitchen in silence.

"Here he comes wi' as mony feet's a hen!" cried his father jovially, looking up from his paper.

Macgregor smiled feebly in response, and with a gait not unlike that of the fowl just mentioned, went over to the sink, where he washed long and diligently.

Immediately he had dried his hands he procured his lesson-book and took a chair as far from the fire-side as possible.

"Dinna turn in yer taes like that, laddie," said his mother, who, to his relief, was preparing to go out on a domestic errand. "Onybody wud think ye wis deformed."

"Och, dinna fash yersel', Lizzie," put in her husband. "The wean's fine. He'll jist be easin' his legs efter rinnin' aboot. Wha wis ye playin' wi' the night, Macgregor?"

"Hughie Wulson."

"Whit wis ye playin' at?"

"Haud yer tongue, John," interposed Lizzie, "an' let Macgregor pey attention to his lessons."

"Dod, ay," said John agreeably. "We mauna interfere wi' his lessons. Are ye gaun yer messages noo, Lizzie?"

"Ay. I'll no' be lang. I'm vexed I didna get them done afore ye cam' hame, but I wis gey thrang the day, an' Mrs. M'Ostrich cam' in an' blethered hauf the efternune. She's gaun to ha'e anither pairty, but she's no' askin' Mistress Purdie."

"She's askin' Macgregor, though."

"Macgregor 'll get, if he's a guid laddie. . . Weel, I'll awa' afore the shoppes shut. Luk efter wee Jeannie, if she waukens, an' hear Macgregor his spellin's, if he's ready afore I come back. . . . Macgregor, whit wey ha'e ye gotten yer guid breeks a' twistit-like? Pu' them roon' at the knees, an' see an' learn the meanin's furbye the spellin's."

She hurried away, and silence reigned for a little in the kitchen.

John resumed his paper, but ere long he glanced over it at his son. He felt that all was not well with the youngster.

"Are ye wearit, ma mannie?" 'he asked kindly.

"Naw."

"Are ye no' weel?"

"I'm fine," replied Macgregor in a voice that belied his words.

Three minutes passed, and John took another glance.

His son was holding the lesson-book to one side, and appeared to be examining with much minuteness the knees of his knickerbockers.

"Are ye no' comin' to sit aside me the nicht, Macgregor?" John inquired, dropping his paper and stretching out a big inviting hand.

Macgregor hastily resumed his studies.

"Come awa'," his father went on, "I dinna like ye sittin' there as if you an' me had cast oot. . . . Are ye no' comin'?"

The youngster shook his head; then gulped slightly.

John got up and went over to where the penitent sat. "Macgregor, ye best tell us a' aboot it," he said gently. "Whit's vexin' ye, ma wee man?"

After a little while Macgregor explained his unhappy plight, easing at the same time his stiffened limbs.

"Puir laddie," said his father sympathetically. "It wis a dirty trick to play on ye," he added indignantly.

"I wiped ma haun's on his heid," Macgregor observed with some satisfaction, "an' I wud ha'e gi'ed him a bashin,' if a daft auld wife hadna come oot an'——"

"It's a peety it wisna yer auld breeks," said John reflectively. "I doot yer Maw 'll be sair pit about. . . . I wonder if we canna get them cleaned afore she comes hame. If I had a wee drap terpentine noo, I wud try it."

"There terpentine in the wee press ablow the jaw-box," said Macgregor eagerly. "She wis cleanin' ma auld breeks wi' some the day"

"The vera thing the doctor ordered!" his father exclaimed jubilantly, and went to the cupboard indicated.

"It's a black bottle, Paw"

Just then wee Jeannie awoke and demanded attention. By the time her father realized that she was determined not to go to sleep again, the clock warned him that his wife might return at any moment.

He wrapped the child in a blanket and sat down with her on his knee by the kitchen fire.

"Here, Macgregor; bring ower the bottle, an' we'll try what we can dae."

"Here the bottle, Paw, an' here the wee bit flannen she rubs it in wi'."

"Tak' oot the cork then, an' let's smell to mak' shair it's terpentine—no' that 'I'm jist shair o' the smell. . . . Hph! Ay; I think that's richt. It's a wee thing like speerits o' wine, but that wudna dae hairm onyway. Weel, we'll ha'e to hurry up, or yer Maw 'll catch us. Pit up yer leg, Macgregor."

Macgregor did as commanded, twisting round the cloth so as to bring into position the splatch of green paint.



"Noo, ma mannie, haud the flannen till I pour a drap o' the terpentine on it—dinna jump like that, Jeannie daurlin'—an' then rub it on the pent. Are ye ready?"

"Ay, Paw."

"Aweel, here's guid luck to us a'!" And John with his one free hand cautiously tilted the bottle. "Steady, noo."

"Maw!" cried wee Jeannie with a bound of delight as a key rattled in the outer door.

Macgregor let out a yell of dismay, while John groaned, "We're done fur noo! It's the wrang botle!"

Half a pint of lacquer, thickish and intensely black, was running leisurely down Macgregor's leg as Mrs. Robinson, pleasantly smiling, entered the kitchen.

Lizzie's little whirlwind of wrath had passed, but her husband's wretchedness was not abated by the awful calm of her displeasure which had followed the outburst, and which now seemed as if it would last for ever.

Macgregor, after having his knickerbockers scraped with the back of a knife, had been sent ignominiously to bed, warned that he would be called to his lessons at half-past six in the morning, and informed that he had forfeited his last chance of getting to Mrs. M'Ostrich's party or to any other entertainment which might occur during the approaching festive season.

"Ye canna gang ony place till ye get new breeks, an' that'll no' be this year, I warrant ye!" his mother had said. "So ye needna be greetin' like a muckle tawpy, fut it'll no' gar me change ma mind."

"I'm no' greetin'," he had muttered, not without indignation, and had retired to his bed, where he lay miserably awake, swallowing the lump that always came back.



Wee jeannie, also, had been smartly packed off to her nest, marvelling doubtless at her mother's unwonted sharpness towards her, but fortunately refraining from offering any vocal protest, and falling into placid slumber within five minutes.

By the fireside Mr. Robinson sat silent, a spectacle of profound depression, glancing now and then at this wife, who, having laid her son's spoiled garment on a newspaper methodically spread upon the well-scrubbed deal table, was regarding the green and black stains with eyes from which all earthly hope seemed to have vanished.

"Lizzie," stammered John at last, breaking a wretched silence, "I'm unco vexed, wumman, to gie ye a' this bother. I—I done it a' fur the best."

"Aw, it's nae bother! I've naethin' else to dae, an' ye ken as well as me that breeks cost naethin'," she returned with cold irony.

"But it wis jist a mishap, Lizzie."

"Deed, ay. I ken that fine. You and Macgregor never dae onything wrang—it's aye jist a mishap! Jist that. Hooever, I sud be used to yer mishaps by this time. It's a' ma ain fau't fur gaun oot ma mes-sages an' leavin' ye baith in the hoose. I sud ha'e got Mistress M'Faurlan frae next door to come in an' luk efter ye, the wey she used to dae when I had to leave wee Jeannie in the hoose alane. Oh, I'm no blamin' you an' Macgregor, fur it's no' to be expect'it ye can behave when naeboddy's takin' care o' ye. An' it's fine fun fur me! Ma enyement is mair nor I can describe!" Here she groaned.

"Ye're awfu' severe on a man, Lizzie," sighed her husband, after a short pause, wherein he suppressed a less humble remark.

"I wis speakin' aboot weans,"

For a little while Mt. Robinson held his peace. Then he began to plead for his son.

"Ye see, Lizzie, it wis ma fau't. Macgregor never

thocht of the terpentine. *He wisna fur tryin' to conceal his ain mishap wi' the green pent."*

"Wis he no' ! Whit wey wis he turnin' in his taes an' twistin' roon' his breeks ?"

"I wud h'e done the same masel,' Lizzie."

"I've nae doot ye wud."

"Tits, wumman !" he exclaimed, "whit wud *you* ha'e done ?"

Mrs. Robinson mads no answer. She took a shawl from a peg and threw it round her shoulders.

"Ye're no' gaun ootbye again at this time o' nicht ?" said her husband in surprise.

"I'm jist gaun to the druggist. He's open till ten."

"Are ye no' weel, wife ?"

"I'm gaun to see if he's got onything that'll tak' oot yer mess. Maybe benzine 'll dae, but I doot it."

"I'll gang fur ye," John said eagerly. "It maybe wudna be safe to leave me in the hoose, Lizzie," he added with an attempt at a laugh.

"Maybe ye're richt," she retorted coldly. "Ye can gang, if ye like. . . . Tak' the breeks wi' ye. Gang quick, fur it's near ten."

John put on his cap and made for the door. There he halted for a moment. "Try an' let Macgreegor aff this time," he whispered.

Lizzie heard the outer door shut quietly, and seated hereself to wait her man's return. It had been an extra hard day, and she nodded drowsily.

Presently she became aware that her son, barefooted and mournful of countenance, was standing beside her.

"Whit are ye wantin', Macgreegor ?"

"I—I'm vexed, Maw."

"Muckle need ! . . . Can ye no' sleep ?"

"Naw. . . . It wis me to—to blame, Maw. I—I tell't him the wrang botle, an'—an' I didna ken the lamp-post wis new pentit."

"But ye maun try to ha'e some sense, laddie," she said, with diminishing severity.

"Ay, Maw; I'll try. . . . But dinna be vexed wi' Paw. . . . I'm—I'm no' awfu' heedin' aboot Mistress M'Ostrich's pairty, an' I'll learn ma lessons early in the mornin', an'—an' I'll dae wi'oot taiblet on Setturday, an' tak' ile. if ye like. But dinna——"

"Whisht, dearie!"

"But——"

Lizzie put her arm round him, and smiled reassuringly, if a little sadly. "Ye're an awfu' laddie!" she murmured. "Wull ye try an' be guid an' wice efter this? Eh?"

"Ay, Maw"

"Weel, gi'e's a kiss, an' awa' to yer beddy-baw. . . . Come, an' I'll tuck ye in."

Mr. and Mrs. Robinson sat later than usual that evening, and did not seem to mind the atmosphere being redolent of benzine, which, after all, was better than having it charged with domestic electricity.

About eleven o'clock, when they were so comfortable that it seemed a pity to retire, the door was cautiously opened and Macgregor peeped in. He saw his parents before they saw him, and his face lost its anxiety.

"Mercy me!" cried his mother, "ye're there again!"

His father smiled as one who has forgotten all his troubles, "What wis ye wantin', ma mannie?"

Macgregor hesitated.

"Whit is't, dearie?" asked Lizzie kindly. "Ye sud ha'e been sleepin' lang syne," she added.

The youngster took heart. "Is the pent aff ma breeks?" he inquired.

"Vera near it," replied John. "Yer Maw's the clever yin! She'll ha'e them as guid as new afore she's done wi' them."

There was a pause. Then—

"Wull I get to Mistress M'Ostrich's pairty?"

## COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. This is a delightful chapter from a book called *Wee Macgregor*, named after the hero, who, as you see, is a small boy apt to get into mischief. What are the most likeable points about him?
2. The dialogue is written in Scots. Do you find it difficult to follow? \* If you read carefully, most of it will become clear from the context, just as the meaning of many long English words can be understood from the general purport of the sentences in which they occur. Make a list of six verbs and six nouns that are spelt differently from the ordinary English; give their meanings.
3. What seem to be Macgregor's mother's chief ambitions for him? Is she really a very stern parent?
4. Explain the part played by Mrs. M'Ostrich in the story.
5. What is your opinion of Mr. Robinson as a father?
6. Where would you place the *crisis* in this story?
7. What do you think is the answer to the last sentence?

## 7. THE TRANTER'S PARTY

(THOMAS HARDY)

DURING the afternoon unusual activity was seen to prevail about the precincts of tranter Dewy's house. The flagstone floor was swept of dust, and a sprinkling of the finest yellow sand from the innermost stratum of the adjoining sand-pit lightly scattered thereupon. Then were produced large knives and forks, which had been shrouded in darkness and grease since the last

\* If you are in a Scottish school, I offer apologies for asking the question.

occasion of the kind, and, bearing upon their sides, "Shear-steel, warranted," in such emphatic letters of assurance, that the cutler's name was not required as further proof, and not given. The key was left in the tap of the cider-barrel, instead of being carried in a pocket. And finally the tranter had to stand up in the room and let his wife wheel him round like a turnstile, to see if anything discreditable was visible in his appearance.

"Stand still till I've been for the scissors," said Mrs. Dewy.

The tranter stood as still as a sentinel at the challenge.

The only repairs necessary were a trimming of one or two whiskers that had extended beyond the general contour of the mass; a like trimming of a slightly frayed edge visible on his shirt-collar; and a final tug at a grey hair—to all of which operations he submitted in resigned silence, except the last, which produced a mild "Come, come, Ann," by way of expostulation.

"Really, Reuben, 'tis quite a disgrace to see such a man," said Mrs. Dewy, with the severity justifiable in a long-trying companion, giving him another turn round and picking several of Smiler's hairs from the shoulder of his coat. Reuben's thoughts seemed engaged elsewhere, and he yawned. "And the collar of your coat is a shame to behold—so plastered with dirt, or dust, or grease, or something. Why, wherever could you have got it?"

"'Tis my warm nater in summer-time, I suppose. I always did get in such a heat when I bustle about."

"Ay, the Dewys always were such a coarse-skinned family. There's your brother Bob—as fat as a porpoise—just as bad; wi' his low, mean, 'How'st do, Ann?' whenever he meets me. I'd 'How'st do' him, indeed! If the sun only shines out a minute, there be you all streaming in the face—I never see!"

"If I be hot week-days, I must be hot Sundays."

"If any of the girls should turn after their father 'twill be a poor look-out for 'em, poor things! None of my family was sich vulgar perspirers, not one of 'em. But, Lord-a-mercy, the Dewys! I don't know how ever I came into such a family."

"Your woman's weakness when I asked ye to jine us. That's how it was, I suppose;" but the tranter appeared to have heard some such words from his wife before, and hence his answer had not the energy it might have possessed, if the inquiry had possessed the charm of novelty.

"You never did look so well in a pair o' trousers as in them," she continued. "Such a cheap pair as 'twas too. As big as any man could wish to have, and lined inside, and double-lined in the lower parts, and an extra piece of stiffening at the bottom. And 'tis a nice-high cut that comes up right under your armpits, and there's enough turned down inside the seams to make half a pair more, besides a piece of stuff left that will make an honest waistcoat—all by my contriving in buying the stuff at a bargain, and having it made up under my eye. It only shows what may be done by taking a little trouble, and not going straight to the rascally tailors."

The discourse was cut short by the sudden appearance of Charley on the scene with a face and hands of hideous blackness, and a nose guttering like a candle. Why, on that particularly cleanly afternoon, he should have discovered that the chimney-crook and chain from which the hams were suspended should have possessed more merits and general interest as playthings than any other article in the house, is a question for nursing mothers to decide. However, the humour seemed to lie in the result being, as has been seen, that any given player with these articles was in the long-run daubed with soot. The last that was seen of Charley by daylight after this piece of ingenuity was when in the act of vanishing from his father's presence.



round the corner of the house—looking back over his shoulder with an expression of great sin on his face, like Cain as the Outcast in Bible pictures.

The guests had all assembled, and the tranter's party had reached that degree of development which accords with ten o'clock p.m. in rural assemblies. At that hour the sound of a fiddle in process of tuning was heard from the inner pantry.

"That's Dick," said the tranter. "That lad's crazy for a jig."

"Dick! Now I cannot—really, I cannot allow any dancing at all till Christmas Day is out," said old William emphatically. "When the clock ha' done striking twelve, dance as much as ye like."

"Well, I must say there's reason in that, William," said Mrs. Penny. "If you do have a party on Christmas Day night, 'tis only fair and honourable to the Church of England to have it a sit-still party. Jigging parties be all very well, and this, that, and therefore; but a jigging party looks suspicious. Oh, yes; stop till the clock strikes, young folk—so say I."

It happened that some warm mead accidentally got into Mr. Spinks's head about this time.

"Dancing," he said, "is a most strengthening, enlivening, and courting movement, especially with a little beverage added! And dancing is good. But why disturb what is ordained, Richard and Reuben, and the company zhinerally? Why, I ask, as far as that goes?"

"Then nothing till after twelve," said William.

Though Reuben and his wife ruled on social points, religious questions were mostly disposed of by the old man, whose firmness on this head quite counter-balanced a certain weakness in his handling of domestic matters. The hopes of the younger members of the household were therefore relegated to a distance



of one hour and three-quarters—a result that took visible shape in them by a remote and listless look about the eyes—the singing of songs being permitted in the interim.

At five minutes to twelve the soft tuning was again heard in the back quarters; and when at length the clock had whizzed forth the last stroke, Dick appeared ready primed, and the instruments were boldly handled; old William very readily taking the bass-viol from its accustomed nail, and touching the strings as irreligiously as could be desired.

The country-dance called the "Triumph, or Follow my Lover," was the figure with which they opened. The tranter took for his partner Mrs. Penny, and Mrs. Dewy was chosen by Mr. Penny, who made so much of his limited height by a judicious carriage of the head, straightening of the back, and important flashes of his spectacle-glasses, that he seemed almost as tall as the tranter. Mr. Shinar, age about thirty-five, farmer and churchwarden, a character principally composed of watch-chain, with a mouth always hanging on a smile but never smiling, had come quite willingly to the party, and showed a wondrous obliviousness of all his antics on the previous night. But the comely, slender, prettily-dressed prize Fancy Day fell to Dick's lot in spite of some private machinations of the farmer, for the reason that Mr. Shinar, as a richer man, had shown too much assurance in asking the favour, whilst Dick had been duly courteous.

We gain a good view of our heroine as she advances to her place in the ladies' line. She belonged to the taller division of middle height. Flexibility was her first characteristic, by which she appeared to enjoy the most easeful rest when she was in gliding motion. Her dark eyes—arched by brows of so keen, slender, and soft a curve, that they resembled nothing so much as two slurs in music—showed primarily a bright sparkle each. This was softened by a frequent thoughtful-

ness, yet not so frequent as to do away, for more than a few minutes at a time, with a certain coquettishness; which in its turn was never so decided as to banish honesty. Her lips imitated her brows in their clearly-cut outline and softness of curve; and her nose was well shaped—which is saying a great deal, when it is remembered that there are a hundred pretty mouths and eyes for one pretty nose. Add to this, plentiful knots of dark-brown hair, a gauzy dress of white, with blue facings; and the slightest idea may be gained of the young maiden who showed, amidst the rest of the dancing ladies, like a flower among vegetables. And so the dance proceeded. Mr. Shinar, according to the interesting rule laid down, deserted his own partner, and made off down the middle with this fair one of Dick's—the pair appearing from the top of the room like two persons tripping down a lane to be married. Dick trotted behind with what was intended to be a look of composure, but which was, in fact, a rather silly expression of feature—implying, with so much earnestness, that such an elopement could not be tolerated. Then they turned and came back, when Dick grew more rigid around his mouth, and blushed with ingenuous ardour as he joined hands with the rival and formed the arch over his lady's head; relinquishing her again at setting to partners, when Mr. Shinar's new chain quivered in every link, and all the loose flesh upon the tranter—who here came into action again—shook like jelly. Mrs Penny, being always rather concerned for her personal safety when she danced with the tranter, fixed her face to a chronic smile of timidity the whole time it lasted—a peculiarity which filled her features with wrinkles, and reduced her eyes to little straight lines like hyphens, as she jiggled up and down opposite him; repeating in her own person not only his proper movements, but also the minor flourishes which the richness of the tranter's imagination led him to introduce from time to time—an imita-

tion which had about it something of slavish obedience, not unmixed with fear.

The ear-rings of the ladies now flung themselves wildly about, turning violent somersaults, banging this way and that, and then swinging quietly against the ears sustaining them. Mrs. Crumpler—a heavy woman, who, for some reason which nobody ever thought worth inquiry, danced in a clean apron—moved so smoothly through the figure that her feet were never seen; conveying to imaginative minds the idea that she rolled on castors.

Minute after minute glided by, and the party reached the period when ladies' back hair begins to look forgotten and dissipated; when a perceptible dampness makes itself apparent upon the faces even of delicate girls—a ghastly dew having for some time rained from the features of their masculine partners; when skirts begin to be torn out of their gathers; when elderly people, who have stood up to please their juniors, begin to feel sundry small tremblings in the region of the knees, and to wish the interminable dance was at Jericho; when (at country parties) waistcoats begin to be unbuttoned, and when the fiddlers' chairs have been wriggled, by the frantic bowing of their occupiers, to a distance of about two feet from where they originally stood.

Fancy was dancing with Mr. Shinar. Dick knew that Fancy, by the law of good manners, was bound to dance as pleasantly with one partner as with another; yet he could not help suggesting to himself that she need not have put *quite* so much spirit into her steps, nor smiled *quite* so frequently whilst in the farmer's hands.

"I'm afraid you didn't cast off," said Dick mildly to Mr. Shinar, before the latter man's watch-chain had done vibrating from a recent whirl.

Fancy made a motion of accepting the correction; but her partner took no notice, and proceeded with the

next movement, with an affectionate bend towards her.

"That Shinar's too fond of her," the young man said to himself as he watched them. They came to the top again, Fancy smiling warmly towards her partner, and went to their places.

"Mr. Shinar, you didn't cast off," said Dick, for want of something else to demolish him with; casting off himself, and being put out at the farmer's irregularity.

"Perhaps I shan't cast off for any man," said Mr. Shinar.

"I think you ought to, sir."

Dick's partner, a young lady of the name of Lizzy—called Lizz for short—tried to mollify.

"I can't say that I myself have much feeling for casting off," she said.

"Nor I," said Mrs Penny, following up the argument; "especially if a friend and neighbour is set against it. Not but that 'tis a terrible tasty thing in good hands and well done; yes, indeed, so say I."

All I meant was," said Dick, rather sorry that he had spoken correctly to a guest, "that 'tis in the dance; and a man has hardly any right to hack and mangle what was ordained by the regular dance-maker, who, I dare say, got his living by making 'em, and thought of nothing else all his life."

"I don't like casting off: then very well; I cast off for no dance-maker that ever lived."

Dick now appeared to be doing mental arithmetic, the act being really an effort to present to himself, in an abstract form, how far an argument with a formidable rival ought to be carried, when that rival was his mother's guest. The deadlock was put an end to by the stamping arrival up the middle of the tranter, who, despising minutiae on principle, started a theme of his own.

"I assure you, naibours," he said, "the heat of my frame no tongue can tell!" He looked around, and endeavoured to give, by a forcible gaze of self-sympathy, some faint idea of the truth.

Mrs. Dewy formed one of the next couple.

"Yes," she said, in an auxiliary tone, "Reuben always was such a hot man."

Mrs. Penny implied the correct species of sympathy that such a class of affliction required, by trying to smile and to look grieved at the same time.

"If he only walk round the garden of a Sunday morning, his shirt-collar is as limp as no starch at all," continued Mrs. Dewy, her countenance lapsing parenthetically into a housewifely expression of concern at the reminiscence.

"Come, come, you wimmen-folk; 'tis hands-across—come, come!" said the tranter; and the conversation ceased for the present.

Dick had at length secured Fancy for that most delightful of country-dances, beginning with six-hands-round.

"Before we begin," said the tranter, "my proposal is, that 'twould be a right and proper plan for every martel man in the dance to pull off his jacket, considering the heat."

"Such low notions as you have, Reuben! Nothing but strip will go down with you when you are a-dancing. Such a hot man as he is!"

"Well now, look here, my sonnies," he argued to his wife, whom he often addressed in the plural masculine for convenience of epithet merely; "I don't see that. You dance and get hot as fire; therefore you lighten your clothes. Isn't that nater and reason for gentle and simple? If I strip by myself and not necessary, 'tis rather pot-housey, I own; but if we stout chaps strip one and all, why, 'tis the native manners of the country, which no man can gainsay. Hey—what do you say, my sonnies?"

"Strip we will !" said the three other heavy men : and their coats were accordingly taken off and hung in the passage, whence the four sufferers from heat soon reappeared, marching in close column, with flapping shirt sleeves, and having, as common to them all, a general glance of being now a match for any man or dancer in England or Ireland. Dick, fearing to lose ground in Fancy's good opinion, retained his coat ; and Mr. Shinar did the same from superior knowledge.

And now a further phase of rural revelry had disclosed itself. It was the time of night when a guest may write his name in the dust upon the tables and chairs, and a bluish mist pervades the atmosphere, becoming a distinct halo round the candles ; when people's nostrils, wrinkles, and crevices in general, seem to be getting gradually plastered up ; when the very fiddlers as well as the dancers get red in the face, the dancers having advanced further still towards incandescence, and entered the cadaverous phase ; the fiddlers no longer sit down, but kick back their chairs and saw madly at the strings, with legs firmly spread and eyes closed, regardless of the visible world. The room became to Dick like a picture in a dream ; all that he could remember of it afterwards being the look of the fiddlers going to sleep, as humming-tops sleep—by increasing their motion and hum, together with the figures of grandfather James and old Simon Crumpler sitting by the chimney-corner, talking and nodding in dumb show, and beating the air to their emphatic sentences like people in a railway train.

The dance ended. "Piph-h-h-h !" said tranter Dewy, blowing out his breath in the very finest stream of vapour that a man's lips could form. "A regular tightener, that one, sonnies !" He wiped his forehead, and went to the cider-mug on the table.

"Well !" said Mrs. Penny, flopping into a chair, "my heart haven't been in such a thumping state



of uproar since I used to sit up on old Midsummer-eves to see who my husband was going to be."

"And that's getting on for a good few years ago now, from what I've heard you tell," said the tranter, without lifting his eyes from the cup he was filling. Being now engaged in the business of handing round refreshments, he was warranted in keeping his coat off still, though the other heavy men had resumed theirs.

"And a thing I never expected would come to pass, if you'll believe me, cam to pass then," continued Mrs. Penny. "Ah, the first spirit ever I see on a Midsummer-eve was a puzzle to me when he appeared, a hard puzzle, so say I!"

"So I should have imagined; as far as that goes," said Elias Spinks.

"Yes," said Mrs. Penny, throwing her glance into past times, and talking on in a running tone of complacent abstraction, as if a listener were not a necessity. "Yes; never was I in such a taking as on that Midsummer-eve! I sat up, quite determined to see if John Wildway was going to marry me or no. I put the bread-and-cheese and cider quite ready, as the witch's book ordered, and I opened the door, and I waited till the clock struck twelve, my nerves all alive, and so distinct that I could feel every one of 'em twitching like bell-wires. Yes, sure! and when the clock had struck, lo and behold! I could see through the door a *little small* man in the lane wi' a shoemaker's apron on."

Here Mr. Penny stealthily enlarged himself half an inch.

"Now, John Wildway," Mrs. Penny continued, "who courted me at that time, was a shoemaker, you see, but he was a very fair-sized man, and I couldn't believe that any such a little small man had anything to do wi' me, as anybody might. But on he came, and crossed the threshold—not John, but actually

the same little small man in the shoemaker's apron——”

“You needn't be so mighty particular about little and small !” said her husband, pecking the air with his nose.

“In he walks, and down he sits, and oh, my goodness me, didn't I flee upstairs, body and soul hardly hanging together ! Well, to cut a long story short, by-long and by-late, John Wildway and I had a miff and parted ; and, lo and behold ! the coming man came ! Penny asked me if I'd go snacks with him, and afore I knew what I was about a'most, the thing was done.”

“I've fancied you never knew better in your life ; but I may be mistaken,” said Mr. Penny in a murmur.

After Mrs. Penny had spoken, there being no new occupation for her eyes, she still let them stay idling on the past scenes just related, which were apparently visible to her in the candle-flame. Mr. Penny's remark received no reply.

During this discourse the tranter and his wife might have been observed standing in an unobtrusive corner in mysterious closeness to each other, a just perceptible current of intelligence passing from each to each, which had apparently no relation whatever to the conversation of their guests, but much to their sustenance. A conclusion of some kind having at length been drawn, the palpable confederacy of man and wife was once more obliterated, the tranter marching off into the pantry, humming a tune that he couldn't quite recollect, and then breaking into the words of a song of which he could remember about one line and a quarter. Mrs. Dewy mentioned a few words about preparations for a bit of supper.

That portion of the company which loved eating and drinking then put on a look to signify that till that moment they had quite forgotten that it was customary to eat suppers in this climate ; going even

further than this politeness of feature, and abruptly starting irrelevant subjects, the exceeding flatness and forced tone of which rather betrayed their object. The younger members said they were quite hungry, and that supper would be delightful though it was so late.

"A new music greets our ears now," said Miss Fancy, alluding, with the sharpness that her position as village sharpener demanded, to the contrast between the rattle of knives and forks and the late notes of the fiddlers.

"Ay; and I don't know but that 'tis sweeter in tone when you get above forty," said the tranter; "except, in faith, 'tis as regards father there: never such a martel man as he for tunes. They move his soul; don't 'em, father?"

The eldest Dewy smiled across from his distant chair an assent to Reuben's remark.

"Spaking of being moved in soul," said Mr. Penny, "I shall never forget the first time I heard the 'Dead March.' 'Twas at poor Corp'l Nineman's funeral at Casterbridge. It fairly made my hair creep and fidget about like a flock of sheep—ah, it did, souls! And when they had done, and the last trump had sounded, and the guns was fired over the dead hero's grave, an icy-cold drop of moist sweat hung upon my forehead, and another upon my jawbone. Ah, 'tis a very solemn thing!"

"Well, as to father in the corner there," the tranter said, pointing to old William, who was in the act of filling his mouth; "he'd starve to death for music's sake now, as much as when he was a boy-chap of fifteen."

"Truly, now," said Michael Mail, clearing the corner of his throat in the manner of a man who meant to be convincing; "there's a friendly tie of some sort between music and eating." He lifted the cup to his mouth, and drank himself gradually backwards

from a perpendicular position to a slanting one, during which time his looks performed a circuit from the wall opposite him to the ceiling overhead. Then clearing the other corner of his throat: "Once I was sitting in the little kitchen of the Three Choughs at Casterbridge, having a bit of dinner, and a brass band struck up in the street. Such a beautiful band as that were! I was sitting eating fried liver and lights, I well can mind—ah, I was! and to save my life, I couldn't help chawing to the tune. Band played six-eight time; six-eight chaws I, willy-nilly. Band plays common; common time went my teeth among the fried liver and lights as true as a hair. Beautiful 'twere! Ah, I shall never forget that there band!"

"That's as musical a circumstance as ever I heard of," said grandfather James, with the absent gaze which accompanies profound criticism.

"I don't like Michael's musical circumstances then," said Mrs. Dewy. "They are quite coarse to a person of decent taste."

Old Michael's mouth twitched here and there, as if he wanted to smile but didn't know where to begin, which gradually settled to an expression that it was not displeasing for a nice woman like the tranter's wife to correct him.

"Well, now," said Reuben, with decisive earnestness, "that coarseness that's so upsetting to Ann's feelings is to my mind a recommendation; for it do always prove a story to be true. And for the same reason, I like a story with a bad moral. My sonnies, all true stories have a coarseness or a bad moral, depend upon't. If the story-tellers could have got decency and good morals from true stories, who'd ha' troubled to invent parables?" Saying this, the tranter arose to fetch a new stock of cider, mead, and home-made wines.

Mrs. Dewy sighed, and appended a remark (ostensibly behind her husband's back, though that the

words should reach his ears distinctly was understood by both): "Such a man as Dewy is! nobody do know the trouble I have to keep that man barely respectable. And did you ever hear too—just now at supper-time—talking about 'taties' with Michael in such a labourer's way. Well, 'tis what I was never brought up to! With our family 'twas never less than 'taters,' and very often 'pertatoes' outright; mother was so particular and nice with us girls: there was no family in the parish that kept theirselves up more than we."

The hour of parting came. Fancy could not remain for the night, because she had engaged a woman to wait up for her; and Dick surveyed the chair she had last occupied, looking now like a setting from which the gem has been torn. There stood her glass, and the romantic teaspoonful of elder wine at the bottom that she couldn't drink by trying ever so hard, in obedience to the mighty arguments of the tranter (his hand coming down upon her shoulder the while, like a Nasmyth hammer): but the drinker was there no longer. There were the nine or ten pretty little crumbs she had left on her plate; but the eater was no more seen.

There seemed to be a disagreeable closeness of relationship between himself and the members of his family, now that they were left alone again face to face. His father seemed quite offensive for appearing to be in just as high spirits as when the guests were there; and as for grandfather James (who had not yet left), he was quite fiendish in being rather glad they were gone.

"Really," said the tranter, in a tone of placid satisfaction, "I've had so little time to attend to myself all the evenen, that I mane to enjoy a quiet meal now! A slice of this here ham—neither too fat nor too lane—so; and then a drop of this vinegar and pickles—there, that's it—and I shall be as fresh

as a lark again ! And to tell the truth, my sonny, my inside 've a-been as dry as a lime-basket all night."

"I like a party very well," said Mrs. Dewy, leaving off the adorned tones she had been bound to use throughout the evening, and returning to the natural marriage voice ; "but, Lord, 'tis such a sight of heavy work next day ! And what with the plates, and knives and forks, and bits kicked off your furniture, and I don't know what-all, why a body could a'most wish there were no such things as Christmases. Ah-h, dear !" she yawned, till, the clock in the corner had ticked several beats. She cast her eyes round upon the dust-laden furniture, and sank down overpowered at the sight.

"Well, I be getting all right by degrees, thank the Lord for't !" said the tranter cheerfully through a mangled mass of ham and bread, without lifting his eyes from his plate, and chopping away with his knife and fork as if he were felling trees. "Ann, you may as well go on to bed at once, and not bide there making such sleepy faces ; you look as long-favoured as a fiddle, upon my life, Ann. There, you must be wearied out, 'tis true. I'll do the doors and wind up the clock ; and you go on, or you'll be as white as a sheet to-morrow."

"Ay ; I don't know whether I shan't or no." The matron passed her hand across her eyes to brush away the film of sleep till she got upstairs.

#### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. *Under the Greenwood Tree* is a very delightful book to read, if you are interested in homely country people. The party described above is one of the best in English literature. It is not quite so amusing, perhaps, as some of those in Dickens's novels, but it has a humour of its own, which you will appreciate if you follow the conversation carefully. Don't be afraid of the hard words :



look them up in your dictionary. It is necessary to know their meaning to appreciate the descriptive passages. Would you call this a jolly party?

2. There is a good deal of "character"-drawing in the narrative. Which of the characters would you describe as *quaint*, and why?
3. Notice the references to music. In an earlier part of *Under the Greenwood Tree* is a chapter called "Going the Rounds," which describes a carol-singing expedition. If you read this you will obtain your first glimpse of Fancy thanking the musicians out of her bedroom window.
4. What do you think of the heroine? How does Hardy make her attractive?
5. Which of the older guests at the party are the most interesting?
6. Describe the tranter's household on an ordinary evening. (A "tranter" means a carrier.)
7. From this extract it is evident that Dick has fallen in love with Fancy. Can you suggest any difficulties in the way of their marriage?
8. Similes, or comparisons, are very useful in describing people. Give some examples of specially effective similes used here.

## 8. SHEEP SLEEP

(DION CLAYTON CALTHROP)

WHAT an old man !

What an old, ancient, weather-beaten, venerable, hoary old man !

With a beard like moss.

Perhaps it was moss. All tangled and twisted like Travellers' Joy. And even flowering here and there.

By him a crooked stick. On him clothes tailored by brambles and coloured by sun and wind.

He sat on a bank just against the gap in the hedge. And when I spoke to him he never stirred.

But he answered "Nod."

I could not nod. I was terribly awake—so awake that my eyes seemed to see more clearly than usual. I could see the diamond eyes of every fairy in every dewdrop. And there were millions. And I could hear a fat bee talking to himself all the time as he went round on his ridiculous job of posting letters in the flowers. "Hum. What, no more than that this morning? What's pollen coming to?"

And a rabbit sat up and brushed its whiskers and yawned and yawned and yawned.

And a great fat frog under a dock leaf shook the cobwebs with his snores.

"Nod," said the incredibly old man.

Yet I was so awake that I could hear the stars whispering in the sky. And I said so. I said—

"My dear old gentleman, I can't sleep."

And then he opened his eyes of blue and smiled at me and said, "Drowsy. Dreamy. Lullaby."

So I answered, "You foolish old man, you dotard and hunks, you silly, childish, moth-eaten relic, haven't I just told you I can't sleep?"

And he replied, "Opiate. Nod. Snooze." All in a low, crooning voice—the voice one uses to a sleepy child.

The world about me seemed asleep; the bee had gone, the rabbit lay curled up dreaming, the tangled honeysuckle in the hedge nodded against the briar rose. I saw it all, for all my senses tingled with a wakefulness cruel and pitiless. I could hear a beggar fairy being sent to sleep in the outhouse with the caterpillars. And the rattle of a spider at her loom came sharp and clear.

I said again, "I cannot sleep."

He rose, that venerable man, and stretched his limbs and smiled. And then he hobbled like some

hoary scarecrow to the place where something—something now I guessed by passages of many years—had broken through the hedge and made a gap.

He called.

There came the tiny tingling of a bell ; of two ; of ten ; of hundreds just shivering—a silver shivering in the breeze.

I said, "My sainted aunt, I know. It is the sheep. The sheep of sleep. He is the shepherd of dreams. What does one do? I know. Count them."

The first came through, and I said, "One."

The sheep bowed gravely. "My story," she began, "is simple but pathetic."

I said to her, "Go away and baa, you stupid animal."

"I was the lamb that Mary had," she answered, mournfully regarding me. "My fleece was once as white as snow. Do you know snow? It tumbles down all dancing silently. It comes when the angels are doing the bedrooms, they tell me. Feather mattresses, you understand. Though some say an old, old woman plucks her geese. A nice girl, Mary. I followed her to school one day. Not a bad school. They taught her to make her own flocks."

"Flocks," I corrected.

"I said flocks," said the sheep. "I went everywhere with her. A sweet child. Do you like children, or macaroni? I prefer lobsters with boiled earwigs. However, I wander. I was a little lamb, and I followed her to school one day. Do I bore you? I thought so. I'll go on. It was sewing day, and they wanted her to make a flock to mutton up the back."

"Button," I said angrily.

"I said mutton," said the sheep drearily. "Are you sleepy?"

"No," I shouted. "Go away."

"It was against the rule," said the sheep. "And I made the children laugh. I was a real wagonette in those days."

"How could you be a wagonette?" I said irritably.

"Well," said the sheep, "I was a little bit of a wag."

They liked me; I was such a lamb, they said. The teacher —"

"Ah!" I said sarcastically. "So there was a teacher."

"The torture," the sheep continued.

"Just now it was a teacher," I said, and threw a clod of earth at her.

"He was a torture. His name was Ptolemy Wilkinson, and his face was like a ladder of blarney."

"Ridiculous fat sheep," said I. "Go away, Go away, please, and send the rest of the flock. Perhaps they all tell abominably long stories."

"They all have tails," she replied imperturbably. "A careless girl. She lost her sheep and didn't know where to find them. Christian name Bo. Surname Peep. Peep of Peep's Dairy. Farmers Nice people. But the girl! A day-dreamer, that's all about it. Not like my Mary Odd name Bo; sounds Chinese, doesn't it?"

"Look here," I cried; "I came here to sleep, not to listen to drivel. I always understood that one thought of nothing, or ate a biscuit, or counted sheep, but it's no use. I can't sleep."

"Sheep, sleep, sheep, sleep," murmured the sheep drowsily. "Think of nothing, multiply it, then take away the date and halve it. What is left is over."

"What is left is madness," I said.

"Mary was not mad," the sheep went on, "I followed her to school one day. I told you that."

"I'm sick of hearing it," said I.

"I've told this story to hundreds of thousands of people," said the sheep anxiously. "And they like it."

It sends them to sleep. So many people can't sleep ; now, I can always sleep ; can't you ?"

In desperation I shouted the word "Butcher !" at her.

She smiled and winked a silly eye at me, and then replied : "Mint Sauce ! That's nothing. I've heard that thousands of times. Think of all the people I meet every night who go to sleep counting me."

"Don't they ever get beyond One ?" I cried.

"Number Three," she said, "is the sheep out of the Ark So old-fashioned, but so entertaining. You'd like her ; she tells the jokes Noah used to make. A dear thing. We are an old family."

"Don't you think you might go on and give the others a chance ?" I asked politely.

"Number Four," she said, and I saw her settle herself more comfortably, "is the March Lamb."

"I understood it to be a Hare," said I, and I found my voice sounding very far away.

"She comes in as a lion and goes out as a lamb. It's a great change, but the weather does it. Do you like weather or walnuts ? Mary liked the school ; they taught her to make puffs."

I found my head nodding, my eyes were half shut, but I struggled to be polite, though the sheep seemed miles away now, and very indistinct. I said : "How did she make puffs ?"

Then the sheep blew out her cheeks full and suddenly let them collapse with a gasp. I nodded again and said in a whisper : "Puffs. How shall I remember that ?"

And then the field grew deliciously warm and comfortable, and I saw the sheep get up and amble away, and then the old man's voice said something, and thousands of sheep began to pour through the gap in the hedge, and I began to count.

"Two, three, four, five——" I slept.

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### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. The book from which this story is taken is called *Breadandbutterflies*, which suggests that its author is a whimsical, imaginative sort of writer. The piece reminds you of your earliest days, but grown-ups seem to like it. Why, do you think ?
2. Note how short some of the sentences are. Does this spoil the effect or add to it ?
3. What slang words are used ? Are they out of place ? If not, why are they permissible ?
4. There seems a lot of nonsense in this narrative. When is nonsense justifiable ? What other nonsense story—not unlike this, but much longer—has become a great favourite with children ?
5. "A ladder of blard." This is a *spoonerism*. Find out what that means, and try to invent a few spoonerisms of your own.
6. What is the main idea of the story ? Trace the stages in its development, and explain why it ends "in the only possible way."

## 9. HOW MUCH LAND DOES A MAN NEED ?

(LEO TOLSTOY)

AN elder sister came to visit her younger sister in the country. The elder was married to a tradesman in town, the younger to a peasant in the village. As the sisters sat over their tea talking, the elder began to boast of the advantages of town life: saying how comfortably they lived there, how well they dressed, what fine clothes her children wore, what good things



they ate and drank, and how she went to the theatre, promenades, and entertainments.

The younger sister was piqued, and in turn disparaged the life of a tradesman, and stood up for that of a peasant.

"I would not change my way of life for yours," said she. "We may live roughly, but at least we are free from anxiety. You live in better style than we do, but though you often earn more than you need, you are very likely to lose all you have. You know the proverb, 'Loss and gain are brothers twain.' It often happens that people who are wealthy one day are begging their bread the next. Our way is safer. Though a peasant's life is not a fat one, it is a long one. We shall never grow rich, but we shall always have enough to eat."

The elder sister said sneeringly—

"Enough? Yes, if you like to share with the pigs and the calves! What do you know of elegance or manners! However much your goodman may slave, you will die as you are living—on a dung heap—and your children the same."

"Well, what of that?" replied the younger. "Of course our work is rough and coarse. But, on the other hand, it is sure; and we need not bow to any one. But you, in your towns, are surrounded by temptation; to-day all may be right, but to-morrow the Evil One may tempt your husband with cards, wine, or women, and all will go to ruin. Don't such things happen often enough?"

Pahóm, the master of the house, was lying on the top of the oven, and he listened to the women's chatter.

"It is perfectly true," thought he. "Busy as we are from childhood tilling mother earth, we peasants have no time to let any nonsense settle in our heads. Our only trouble is that we haven't land enough. If I had plenty of land, I shouldn't fear the Devil himself!"

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The women finished their tea, chatted a while about dress, and then cleared away the tea-things and lay down to sleep.

But the Devil had been sitting behind the oven, and had heard all that was said. He was pleased that the peasant's wife had led her husband into boasting, and that he had said that if he had plenty of land he would not fear Devil himself.

"All right," thought the Devil. "We will have a tussle. I'll give you land enough; and by means of that land I will get you into my power."

## II

Close to the village there lived a lady, a small land-owner, who had an estate of about three hundred acres. She had always lived on good terms with the peasants, until she engaged as her steward an old soldier, who took to burdening the people with fines. However careful Pahóm tried to be, it happened again and again that now a horse of his got among the lady's oats, now a cow strayed into her garden, now his calves found their way into her meadows—and he always had to pay a fine.

Pahóm paid up, but grumbled, and, going home in a temper, was rough with his family. All through that summer, Pahóm had much trouble because of this steward; and he was even glad when winter came and the cattle had to be stabled. Though he grudged the fodder when they could no longer graze on the pasture-land, at least he was free from anxiety about them.

In the winter the news got about that the lady was going to sell her land, and that the keeper of the inn on the high road was bargaining for it. When the peasants heard this they were very much alarmed.

"Well," thought they, "if the innkeeper gets the

land, he will worry us with fines worse than the lady's steward. We all depend on that estate."

So the peasants went on behalf of their Commune, and asked the lady not to sell the land to the innkeeper; offering her a better price for it themselves. The lady agreed to let them have it. Then the peasants tried to arrange for the Commune to buy the whole estate, so that it might be held by them all in common. They met twice to discuss it, but could not settle the matter; the Evil One sowed discord among them, and they could not agree. So they decided to buy the land individually, each according to his means; and the lady agreed to this plan as she had to the other.

Presently Pahóm heard that a neighbour of his was buying fifty acres, and that the lady had consented to accept one half in cash and to wait a year for the other half. Pahóm felt envious.

"Look at that," thought he, "the land is all being sold, and I shall get none of it." So he spoke to his wife.

"Other people are buying," said he, "and we must also buy twenty acres or so. Life is becoming impossible. That steward is simply crushing us with his fines."

So they put their heads together and considered how they could manage to buy it. They had one hundred roubles laid by. They sold a colt, and one half of their bees; hired out one of their sons as a labourer, and took his wages in advance; borrowed the rest from a brother-in-law, and so scraped together half the purchase money.

Having done this, Pahóm chose out a farm of forty acres, some of it wooded, and went to the lady to bargain for it. They came to an agreement, and he shook hands with her upon it, and paid her a deposit in advance. Then they went to town and signed the deeds; he paying half the price down, and undertaking to pay the remainder within two years.

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So now Pahóm had land of his own. He borrowed seed, and sowed it on the land he had bought. The harvest was a good one, and within a year he had managed to pay off his debts both to the lady and to his brother-in-law. So he became a landowner, ploughing and sowing his own land, making hay on his own land, cutting his own trees, and feeding his cattle on his own pasture. When he went out to plough his fields, or to look at his growing corn, or at his grass-meadows, his heart would fill with joy. The grass that grew and the flowers that bloomed there, seemed to him unlike any that grew elsewhere. Formerly, when he had passed by that land, it had appeared the same as any other land, but now it seemed quite different.

### III

*A Rich Pasture ground*  
So Pahóm was well-contented, and everything would have been right if the neighbouring peasants would only not have trespassed on his corn-fields and meadows. He appealed to them most civilly, but they still went on: now the Communal herdsmen would let the village cows stray into his meadows; then horses from the night pasture would get among his corn. Pahóm turned them out again and again, and forgave their owners, and for a long time he forbore from prosecuting any one. But at last he lost patience and complained to the District Court. He knew it was the peasants' want of land, and no evil intent on their part, that caused the trouble; but he thought—

"I cannot go on overlooking it, or they will destroy all I have. They must be taught a lesson."

*murmur at*  
So he had them up, gave them one lesson, and then another, and two or three of the peasants were fined. After a time Pahóm's neighbours began to bear him a grudge for this and would now and then let their cattle on to his land on purpose. One peasant even

got into Pahóm's wood at night and cut down five young lime trees for their bark. Pahóm passing through the wood one day noticed something white. He came nearer, and saw the stripped trunks lying on the ground, and close by stood the stumps where the trees had been. Pahóm was furious.

"If he had only cut one here and there it would have been bad enough," thought Pahóm, "but the rascal has actually cut down a whole clump. If I could only find out who did this I would pay him out."

He racked his brains as to who it could be. Finally he decided: "It must be Simon—no one else could have done it." So he went to Simon's homestead to have a look round, but he found nothing, and only had an angry scene. However, he now felt more certain than ever that Simon had done it, and he lodged a complaint. Simon was summoned. The case was tried, and re-tried, and at the end of it all Simon was acquitted, there being no evidence against him. Pahóm felt still more aggrieved, and let his anger loose upon the Elder and the Judges.

"You let thieves grease your palms," said he. "If you were honest folk yourselves you would not let a thief go free."

So Pahóm quarrelled with the Judges and with his neighbours. Threats to burn his building began to be uttered. So, though Pahóm had more land, his place in the Commune was much worse than before.

About this time a rumour got about that many people were moving to new parts.

"There's no need for me to leave my land," thought Pahóm. "But some of the others might leave our village, and then there would be more room for us. I would take over their land myself, and make my estate a bit bigger. I could then live more at ease. As it is, I am still too cramped to be comfortable."

One day Pahóm was sitting at home, when a peasant, passing through the village, happened to call in.



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He was allowed to stay the night, and supper was given him. Pahóm had a talk with this peasant and asked him where he came from. The stranger answered that he came from beyond the Volga, where he had been working. One word led to another, and the man went on to say that many people were settling in those parts. He told how some people from his village had settled there. They had joined the Commune, and had had twenty-five acres per man granted them. The land was so good, he said, that the 'rye sown on it grew as high as a horse, and so thick that five cuts of a sickle made a sheaf. One peasant, he said, had brought nothing with him but his bare hands, and now he had six horses and two cows of his own.

Pahóm's heart kindled with desire. He thought—"Why should I suffer in this narrow hole if one can live so well elsewhere? I will sell my land and my homestead here, and with the money I will start afresh over there and get everything new. In this crowded place one is always having trouble. But I must first go and find out all about it myself."

Towards summer he got ready and started. He went down the Volga on a steamer to Samàra, then walked another three hundred miles on foot, and at last reached the place. It was just as the stranger had said. The peasants had plenty of land: every man had twenty-five acres of Communal land given him for his use, and any one who had money could buy, besides, at two shillings an acre as much good freehold land as he wanted.

Having found out all he wished to know, Pahóm returned home as autumn came on, and began selling off his belongings. He sold his land at a profit, sold his homestead and all his cattle, and withdrew from membership of the Commune. He only waited till the spring, and then started with his family for the new settlement.



## IV

As soon as Pahóm and his family arrived at their new abode, he applied for admission into the Commune of a large village. He stood treat to the Elders, and obtained the necessary documents. Five shares of Communal land were given him for his own and his sons' use : that is to say—125 acres (not all together, but in different fields), besides the use of the Communal pasture. Pahóm put up the buildings he needed, and bought cattle. Of the Communal land alone he had three times as much as at his former home, and the land was good corn-land. He was ten times better off than he had been. He had plenty of arable land and pasturage, and could keep as many head of cattle as he liked.

At first, in the bustle of building and settling down, Pahóm was pleased with it all, but when he got used to it he began to think that even here he had not enough land. The first year, he sowed wheat on his share of the Communal land, and had a good crop. He wanted to go on sowing wheat, but had not enough Communal land for the purpose, and what he had already used was not available ; for in those parts wheat is only sown on virgin soil or on fallow land. It is sown for one or two years, and then the land lies fallow till it is again overgrown with prairie grass. There were many who wanted such land, and there was not enough for all ; so that people quarrelled about it. Those who were better off wanted it for growing wheat, and those who were poor wanted it to let to dealers, so that they might raise money to pay their taxes. Pahóm wanted to sow more wheat ; so he rented land from a dealer for a year. He sowed much wheat and had a fine crop, but the land was too far from the village—the wheat had to be carted more than ten miles. After a time Pahóm noticed that

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some peasant-dealers were living on separate farms and were growing wealthy ; and he thought—

“If I were to buy some freehold land, and have a homestead on it, it would be a different thing altogether. Then it would all be nice and compact.”

The question of buying freehold land recurred to him again and again.

He went on in the same way for three years : renting land and sowing wheat. The seasons turned out well and the crops were good, so that he began to lay money by. He might have gone on living contentedly, but he grew tired of having to rent other people's land every year, and having to scramble for it. Wherever there was good land to be had the peasants would rush for it and it was taken up at once, so that unless you were sharp about it you got none. It happened in the third year that he and a dealer together rented a piece of pasture land from some peasants ; and they had already ploughed it up, when there was some dispute, and the peasants went to law about it, and things fell out so that the labour was all lost.

“If it were my own land,” thought Pahóm, “I should be independent, and there would not be all this unpleasantness.”

So Pahóm began looking out for land which he could buy ; and he came across a peasant who had bought thirteen hundred acres, but having got into difficulties was willing to sell again cheap. Pahóm bargained and haggled with him and at last they settled the price at 1,500 roubles, part in cash and part to be paid later. They had all but clinched the matter, when a passing dealer happened to stop at Pahóm's one day to get a feed for his horses. He drank tea with Pahóm, and they had a talk. The dealer said that he was just returning from the land of the Bashkirs, far away, where he had bought thirteen thousand acres of land, all for 1,000 roubles. Pahóm questioned him further, and the tradesman said—

"All one need do is to make friends with the chiefs. I gave away about one hundred roubles' worth of dressing-gowns and carpets, besides a case of tea, and I gave wine to those who would drink it; and I got the land for less than twopence an acre. And he showed Pahóm the title-deeds, saying—

"The land lies near a river, and the whole prairie is virgin soil."

Pahóm plied him with questions, and the tradesman said—

"There is more land there than you could cover if you walked a year, and it all belongs to the Bashkirs. They are as simple as sheep, and land can be got almost for nothing."

"There now," thought Pahóm, "with my one thousand roubles, why should I get only thirteen hundred acres, and saddle myself with a debt besides. If I take it out there I can get more than ten times as much for the money."

## V

Pahóm inquired how to get to the place, and as soon as the tradesman had left him, he prepared to go there himself. He left his wife to look after the homestead, and started on his journey taking his man with him. They stopped at a town on their way, and bought a case of tea, some wine, and other presents, as the tradesman had advised. On and on they went until they had gone more than three hundred miles, and on the seventh day they came to a place where the Bashkirs had pitched their tents. It was all just as the tradesman had said. The people lived on the steppes, by a river, in felt-covered tents. They neither tilled the ground nor ate bread. Their cattle and horses grazed in herds on the steppe. The colts were tethered behind the tents, and the mares were

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driven to them twice a day. The mares were milked, and from the milk kumiss was made. It was the women who prepared kumiss, and they also made cheese. As far as the men were concerned, drinking kumiss and tea, eating mutton, and playing on their pipes was all they cared about. They were all stout and merry, and all the summer long they never thought of doing any work. They were quite ignorant and knew no Russian, but were good-natured enough.

As soon as they saw Pahóm, they came out of their tents and gathered round their visitor. An interpreter was found, and Pahóm told them he had come about some land. The Bashkirs seemed very glad; they took Pahóm and led him into one of the best tents, where they made him sit on some down cushions placed on a carpet, while they sat round him. They gave him tea and kumiss, and had a sheep killed and gave him mutton to eat. Pahóm took presents out of his cart and distributed them among the Bashkirs, and divided amongst them the tea. The Bashkirs were delighted. They talked a great deal among themselves, and then told the interpreter to translate.

"They wish to tell you," said the interpreter, "that they like you, and that it is our custom to do all we can to please a guest and to repay him for his gifts. You have given us presents, now tell us which of the things we possess please you best, that we may present them to you."

"What pleases me best here," answered Pahóm, "is your land. Our land is crowded, and the soil is exhausted; but you have plenty of land and it is good land. I never saw the like of it."

The interpreter translated. The Bashkirs talked among themselves for a while. Pahóm could not understand what they were saying, but saw that they were much amused, and that they shouted

and laughed. Then they were silent and looked at Pahóm while the interpreter said—

"They wish me to tell you that in return for your presents they will gladly give you as much land as you want. You have only to point it out with your hand and it is yours."

The Bashkirs talked again for a while and began to dispute. Pahóm asked what they were disputing about, and the interpreter told him that some of them thought they ought to ask their Chief about the land and not act in his absence, while others thought there was no need to wait for his return.

## VI

While the Bashkirs were disputing, a man in a large fox-fur cap appeared on the scene. They all became silent and rose to their feet. The interpreter said, "This is our Chief himself."

Pahóm immediately fetched the best dressing-gown and five pounds of tea, and offered these to the Chief. The Chief accepted them, and seated himself in the place of honour. The Bashkirs at once began telling him something. The chief listened for a while, then made a sign with his head for them to be silent, and addressing himself to Pahóm, said in Russian—

"Well, let it be so. Choose whatever piece of land you like; we have plenty of it."

"How can I take as much as I like?" thought Pahóm. "I must get a deed to make it secure, or else they may say, 'It is yours,' and afterwards may take it away again."

"Thank you for your kind words," he said aloud. "You have much land, and I only want a little. But I should like to be sure which bit is mine. Could it not be measured and made over to me? Life and death are in God's hands. You good people give it

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to me, but your children might wish to take it away again."

"You are quite right," said the Chief. "We will make it over to you."

"I heard that a dealer had been here," continued Pahóm, "and that you gave him a little land, too, and signed title-deeds to that effect. I should like to have it done in the same way."

The Chief understood.

"Yes," replied he, "that can be done quite easily. We have a scribe, and we will go to town with you and have the deed properly sealed."

"And what will be the price?" asked Pahóm.

"Our price is always the same: one thousand roubles a day."

Pahóm did not understand.

"A day? What measure is that? How many acres would that be?"

"We do not know how to reckon it out," said the Chief. "We sell it by the day. As much as you can go round on your feet in a day is yours, and the price is one thousand roubles a day."

Pahóm was surprised.

"But in a day you can get round a large tract of land," he said.

The Chief laughed.

"It will all be yours!" said he. "But there is one condition: If you don't return on the same day to the spot whence you started, your money is lost."

"But how am I to mark the way that I have gone?"

"Why, we shall go to any spot you like, and stay there. You must start from that spot and make your round, taking a spade with you. Wherever you think necessary, make a mark. At every turning, dig a hole and pile up the turf; then, afterwards, we will go round with a plough from hole to hole. You may make as large a circuit as you please, but before



the sun sets you must return to the place you started from. All the land you cover will be yours."

Pahóm was delighted. It was decided to start early next morning. They talked a while, and after drinking some more kumiss and eating some more mutton, they had tea again, and then the night came on. They gave Pahóm a feather-bed to sleep on, and the Bashkirs dispersed for the night, promising to assemble the next morning at daybreak and ride out before sunrise to the appointed spot.

## VII

Pahóm lay on the feather-bed but could not sleep. He kept thinking about the land.

"What a large tract I will mark off!" thought he. "I can easily do thirty-five miles in a day. The days are long now, and within a circuit of thirty-five miles what a lot of land there will be! I will sell the poorer land, or let it to peasants, but I'll pick out the best and farm it. I will buy two ox-teams, and hire two more labourers. About a hundred and fifty acres shall be plough-land, and I will pasture cattle on the rest."

Pahóm lay awake all night and dozed off only just before dawn. Hardly were his eyes closed when he had a dream. He thought he was lying in that same tent, and heard somebody chuckling outside. He wondered who it could be, and rose and went out, and he saw the Bashkir Chief sitting in front of the tent holding his sides and rolling about with laughter. Going nearer to the Chief, Pahóm asked: "What are you laughing at?" But he saw that it was no longer the Chief, but the dealer who had recently stopped at his house and had told him about the land. Just as Pahóm was going to ask, "Have you been here long?" he saw that it was not the dealer, but the peasant who

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had come up from the Volga, long ago, to Pahóm's old home. Then he saw that it was not the peasant either, but the Devil himself with hoofs and horns, sitting there and chuckling, and before him lay a man barefoot, prostrate on the ground, with only trousers and a shirt on. And Pahóm dreamt that he looked more attentively to see what sort of a man it was that was lying there, and he saw that the man was dead, and that it was himself ! He awoke horror-struck.

"What things one does dream," thought he.

Looking round he saw through the open door that the dawn was breaking.

"It's time to wake them up," thought he. "We ought to be starting."

He got up, roused his man (who was sleeping in his cart), bade him harness ; and went to call the Bashkirs.

"It's time to go to the steppe to measure the land," he said

The Bashkirs rose and assembled, and the Chief came too. Then they began drinking kumiss again, and offered Pahóm some tea, but he would not wait.

"If we are to go, let us go. It is high time," said he.

## VIII

The Bashkirs got ready and they all started : some mounted on horses, and some in carts. Pahóm drove in his own small cart with his servant, and took a spade with him. When they reached the steppe, the morning red was beginning to kindle. They ascended a hillock (called by the Bashkirs a *shikhan*) and dismounted from their carts and their horses, gathered in one spot. The Chief came up to Pahóm and stretching out his arm towards the plain—

"See," said he, "all this, as far as your eye can

reach, is ours. You may have any part of it you like."

Pahóm's eyes glistened: it was all virgin soil, as flat as the palm of your hand, as black as the seed of a poppy, and in the hollows different kinds of grasses grew breast high.

The Chief took off his fox-fur cap, placed it on the ground and said—

"This will be the mark. Start from here, and return here again. All the land you go round shall be yours."

Pahóm took out his money and put it on the cap. Then he took off his outer coat, remaining in his sleeveless under-coat. He unfastened his girdle and tied it tight below his stomach, put a little bag of bread into the breast of his coat, and tying a flask of water to his girdle, he drew up the tops of his boots, took the spade from his man, and stood ready to start. He considered for some moments which way he had better go—it was tempting everywhere.

"No matter," he concluded, "I will go towards the rising sun."

He turned his face to the east, stretched himself, and waited for the sun to appear above the rim.

"I must lose no time," he thought, "and it is easier walking while it is still cool."

The sun's rays had hardly flashed above the horizon, before Pahóm, carrying the spade over his shoulder, went down into the steppe.

Pahóm started walking neither slowly nor quickly. After having gone a thousand yards he stopped, dug a hole, and placed pieces of turf one on another to make it more visible. Then he went on; and now that he had walked off his stiffness he quickened his pace. After a while he dug another hole.

Pahóm looked back. The hillock could be distinctly seen in the sunlight, with the people on it, and the glittering tyres of the cart-wheels. At a rough

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guess Pahóm concluded that he had walked three miles. It was growing warmer; he took off his under-coat, flung it across his shoulder, and went on again. It had grown quite warm now; he looked at the sun, it was time to think of breakfast.

"The first shift is done, but there are four in a day, and it is too soon yet to turn. But I will just take off my boots," said he to himself.

He sat down, took off his boots, stuck them into his girdle, and went on. It was easy walking now.

"I will go on for another three miles," thought he, "and then turn to the left. This spot is so fine, that it would be a pity to lose it. The farther one goes, the better the land seems.

He went straight on for a while, and when he looked round, the hillock was scarcely visible and the people on it looked like black ants, and he could just see something glistening there in the sun.

"Ah," thought Pahóm, "I have gone far enough in this direction, it is time to turn. Besides I am in a regular sweat, and very thirsty."

He stopped, dug a large hole, and heaped up pieces of turf. Next he untied his flask, had a drink, and then turned sharply to the left. He went on and on: the grass was high, and it was very hot.

Pahóm began to grow tired: he looked at the sun and saw that it was noon.

"Well," he thought, "I must have a rest."

He sat down and ate some bread and drank some water; but he did not lie down, thinking that if he did he might fall asleep. After sitting a little while, he went on again. At first he walked easily: the food had strengthened him; but it had become terribly hot, and he felt sleepy; still he went on, thinking: "An hour to suffer, a life-time to live."

He went a long way in this direction also, and was about to turn to the left again, when he perceived a damp hollow: "It would be a pity to leave that

out," he thought. "Flax would do well there." So he went on past the hollow, and dug a hole on the other side of it before he turned the corner. Pahóm looked towards the hillock. The heat made the air hazy: it seemed to be quivering, and through the haze the people on the hillock could scarcely be seen.

"Ah!" thought Pahóm, "I have made the sides too long; I must make this one shorter." And he went along the third side, stepping faster. He looked at the sun: it was nearly half-way to the horizon, and he had not yet done two miles of the third side of the square. He was still ten miles from the goal.

"No," he thought, "though it will make my land lop-sided, I must hurry back in a straight line now. I might go too far, and as it is I have a great deal of land."

So Pahóm hurriedly dug a hole, and turned straight towards the hillock.

## IX

Pahóm went straight towards the hillock, but he now walked with difficulty. He was done up with the heat, his bare feet were cut and bruised, and his legs began to fail. He longed to rest, but it was impossible if he meant to get back before sunset. The sun waits for no man, and it was sinking lower and lower.

"Oh dear," he thought, "if only I have not blundered trying for too much! What if I am too late?"

He looked towards the hillock and at the sun. He was still far from his goal, and the sun was already near the rim.

Pahóm walked on and on; it was very hard walking, but he went quicker and quicker. He pressed on, but was still far from the place. He began running, threw away his coat, his boots, his flask, and his cap, and kept only the spade, which he used as a support.

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"What shall I do?" he thought again. "I have grasped too much, and ruined the whole affair. I can't get there before the sun sets."

And this fear made him still more breathless. Pahóm went on running, his soaking shirt and trousers stuck to him, and his mouth was parched. His breast was working like a blacksmith's bellows, his heart was beating like a hammer, and his legs were giving way as if they did not belong to him. Pahóm was seized with terror lest he should die of the strain.

Though afraid of death, he could not stop. "After having run all that way they will call me a fool if I stop now," thought he. And he ran on and on, and drew near and heard the Bashkirs yelling and shouting to him, and their cries inflamed his heart still more. He gathered his last strength and ran on.

The sun was close to the rim, and, cloaked in mist, looked large and red as blood. Now, yes now, it was about to set! The sun was quite low, but he was also quite near his aim. Pahóm could already see the people on the hillock waving their arms to hurry him up. He could see the fox-fur cap on the ground, and the money on it, and the Chief sitting on the ground holding his sides. And Pahóm remembered his dream.

"There is plenty of land," thought he, "but will God let me live on it? I have lost my life, I have lost my life! I shall never reach that spot!"

Pahóm looked at the sun, which had reached the earth: one side of it had already disappeared. With all his remaining strength he rushed on, bending his body forward so that his legs could hardly follow fast enough to keep him from falling. Just as he reached the hillock it suddenly grew dark. Her looked up—the sun had already set! He gave a cry: "All my labour has been in vain," thought he, and was about to stop, but he heard the Bashkirs still shouting, and remembered that though to him, from below, the



sun seemed to have set, they on the hillock could still see it. He took a long breath and ran up the hillock. It was still light there. He reached the top and saw the cap. Before it sat the Chief laughing and holding his sides. Again Pahóm remembered his dream, and he uttered a cry: his legs gave way beneath him, he fell forward and reached the cap with his hands.

"Ah, that's a fine fellow!" exclaimed the Chief. "He has gained much land!"

Pahóm's servant came running up and tried to raise him, but he saw that blood was flowing from his mouth. Pahóm was dead!

The Bashkirs clicked their tongues to show their pity.

His servant picked up the spade and dug a grave long enough for Pahóm to lie in, and buried him in it. Six feet from his head to his heels was all he needed.

#### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. The above narrative is one of *Twenty-three Tales* translated from the Russian of Count Leo Tolstoy, who became a peasant and lived a life of poverty.

Note how intimately acquainted he is with farming in all its aspects.

2. Do you think his detailed accounts of business transactions are necessary? How, if at all, do they add to the effect of the story?
3. What is Pahóm's chief weakness? Can you find any excuse for him?
4. The tale is rather longer than most in this collection. How does the author manage to sustain your interest?
5. Note how the story begins. Does it develop quickly or slowly? When does it reach a crisis?
6. What is there specially interesting about the Bashkirs?
7. The part played by the Devil is only briefly described, but it is very important. Why?

## 10. THE JUMPING FROG

(MARK TWAIN)

IN compliance with the request of a friend of mine, who wrote me from the East, I called on good-natured, garrulous old Simon Wheeler and inquired after my friend's friend, *Leonidas W. Smiley*, as requested to do, and I hereunto append the result. I have a lurking suspicion that *Leonidas W. Smiley* is a myth; that my friend never knew such a personage; and that he only conjectured that if I asked old Wheeler about him it would remind him of his infamous *Jim Smiley*, and he would go to work and bore me nearly to death with some reminiscence of him as long and tedious as it should be useless of me. If that was the design, it certainly succeeded.

I found Simon Wheeler dozing comfortably by the bar-room stove of the old, dilapidated tavern in the ancient mining camp of Angel's, and I noticed that he was fat and bald-headed, and had an expression of winning gentleness and simplicity upon his tranquil countenance. He roused up and gave me good-day. I told him a friend of mine had commissioned me to make some inquiries about a cherished companion of his boyhood named *Leonidas W. Smiley*—Rev. *Leonidas W. Smiley*—a young minister of the Gospel, who he had heard was at one time a resident of Angel's Camp. I added that if Mr. Wheeler could tell me anything about this Rev. *Leonidas W. Smiley* I would feel under many obligations to him.

Simon Wheeler backed me into a corner and blockaded me there with his chair, and then sat me down and reeled off the monotonous narrative which follows this paragraph. He never smiled, he never frowned, he never changed his voice from the gentle-

flowing key to which he tuned the initial sentence, he never betrayed the slightest suspicion of enthusiasm ; but all through the interminable narrative there ran a vein of impressive earnestness and sincerity, which showed me plainly that, so far from his imagining that there was anything ridiculous or funny about his story, he regarded it as a really important matter, and admired its two heroes as men of transcendent genius in *finesse*. To me, the spectacle of a man drifting serenely along through such a queer yarn without ever smiling was exquisitely absurd. As I said before, I asked him to tell me what he knew of Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, and he replied as follows. I let him go on in his own way, and never interrupted him once :

There was a feller here once by the name of *Jim* Smiley, in the winter of '49—or maybe it was the spring of '50—I don't recollect exactly, somehow, though what makes me think it was one or the other is because I remember the big flume wasn't finished when he first came to the camp ; but anyway he was the curiousest man about always betting on anything that turned up you ever see, if he could get anybody to bet on the other side ; and if he couldn't, he'd change sides. Any way that suited the other man would suit him—any way just so's he got a bet, *he* was satisfied. But still he was lucky, uncommon lucky : he 'most always come out winner. He was always ready and laying for a chance ; there couldn't be no solit'ry thing mentioned but that feller'd offer to bet on it, and take any side you please, as I was just telling you. If there was a horse race, you'd find him flush or you'd find him busted at the end of it ; if there was a dog fight, he'd bet on it ; if there was a cat fight, he'd bet on it ; if there was a chicken fight, he'd bet on it ; why, if there was two birds sitting on a fence, he would bet you which one would fly first ; or if there was a camp meeting, he would be there reg'lar, to bet on Parson

Walker, which he judged to be the best exhorter about here, and so he was too, and a good man. If he even seen a straddle bug start to go anywheres, he would bet you how long it would take him to get wherever he was going to, and if you took him up he would foller that straddle bug to Mexico but what he would and out where he was bound for and how long he was on the road. Lots of the boys here has seen that Smiley and can tell you about him. Why, it never made no difference—to *him*—he would bet on, *anything*—the dangdest feller. Parson Walker's wife laid very sick once, for a good while, and it seemed as if they warn't going to save her; but one morning he come in, and Smiley asked how she was, and he said she was considerable better—thank the Lord for his inf'nit' mercy—and coming on so smart that, with the blessing of Providence, she'd get well yet; and Smiley, before he thought, says, "Well, I'll risk two-and-a-half that she don't, anyway."

This yer Smiley had a mare—the boys called her the fifteen-minute nag, but that was only in fun, you know, because, of course, she was faster than that—and he used to win money on that horse, for all she was so slow and always had the asthma, or the distemper, or the consumption, or something of that kind. They used to give her two or thee hundred yards' start, and then pass her under way; but always at the fag end of the race she'd get excited and desperate like, and come cavorting and straddling up, and scattering her legs around limber, sometimes in the air, and sometimes out to one side amongst the fences, and kicking up m-o-r-e dust, and raising m-o-r-e racket with her coughing and sneezing and blowing her nose—and always fêch up at the stand just about a neck ahead, as near as you could cipher it down.

And he had a little small bull-pup, that to look at him you'd think he wa'n't worth a cent but to set around and look ornery and lay for a chance to steal

something. But as soon as the money was up on him, he was a different dog; his underjaw'd begin to stick out like the fo'castle of a steamboat, and his teeth would uncover, and shine savage like the furnaces. And a dog might tackle him, and bullyrag him, and bite him, and throw him over his shoulder two or three times, and Andrew Jackson—which was the name of the pup—Andrew Jackson would never let on but what *he* was satisfied and hadn't expected nothing else—and the bets being doubled and doubled on the other side all the time, till the money was all up; and then all of a sudden he would grab that other dog jest by the j'int of his hind leg and freeze to it—not chaw, you understand, but only jest grip and hang on till they throwed up the sponge, if it was a year. Smiley always come out winner on that pup, till he harnessed a dog once that didn't have no hind legs, because they'd been sawed off by a circular saw; and when the thing had gone along far enough, and the money was all up, and he come to make a snatch for his pet holt, he saw in a minute how he'd been imposed on, and how the other dog had him in the door, so to speak, and he 'peared surprised, and then he looked sorter discouraged like, and didn't try no more to win the fight, and so he got shucked out bad. He gave Smiley a look, as much as to say his heart was broke, and it was *his* fault, for putting up a dog that hadn't no hind legs for him to take holt of, which was his main dependence in a fight, and then he limped off a piece and laid down and died. It was a good pup, was that Andrew Jackson, and would have made a name for hisself if he'd lived, for the stuff was in him, and he had genius: I know it, because he hadn't had no opportunities to speak of, and it don't stand to reason that a dog could make such a fight as he could under them circumstances, if he hadn't no talent. It always makes me feel sorry when I think of that last fight of his'n, and the way it turned out.



## The Jumping Frog

Well, this yer Smiley had rat terriers, and chicken cocks, and tomcats, and all them kind of things, till you couldn't rest, and you couldn't fetch nothing for him to bet on but he'd match you. He ketched a frog one day, and took him home, and said he calc'lated to edercate him; and so he never done nothing for three months but set in his back yard and learn that frog to jump. And you bet he *did* learn him, too. He'd give him a little push behind, and the next minute you'd see that frog whirling in the air like a doughnut—see him turn one summerset, or maybe a couple, if he got a good start, and come down flat-footed and all right, like a cat. He got him up so in the matter of catching flies, and kept him in practice so constant, that he'd nail a fly every time as far as he could see him. Smiley said all a frog wanted was education, and he could do 'most anything; and I believe him. Why, I've seen him set Dan'l Webster down here on this floor—Dan'l Webster was the name of the frog—and sing out "Flies, Dan'l, flies!" and quicker'n you could wink, he'd spring straight up, and snake a fly off'n the counter there, and flop down on the floor again as solid as a gob of mud, and fall to scratching the side of his head with his hind foot as if he hadn't no idea he'd been doin' any more'n any frog might do. You never see a frog so modest and straightfor'ard as he was, for all he was so gifted. And when it come to fair and square jumping on a dead level, he could get over more ground at one straddle than any animal of his breed you ever see. Jumping on a dead level was his strong suit, you understand; and when it come to that, Smiley would put up money on him as long as he had a red. Smiley was monstrous proud of his frog and well he might be, for fellers that had travelled and been everywheres, all said he laid over any frog that ever *they* see.

Well, Smiley kept the beast in a little lattice box, and he used to fetch him down town sometimes and



lay for a bet. One day a feller—a stranger in the camp, he was—come across him with his box, and says—

“What might it be that you’ve got in the box?”

And Smiley says, sorter indifferent like, “It might be a parrot, or it might be a canary, maybe; but it ain’t: it’s only just a frog.”

And the feller took it, and looked at it careful, and turned it round this way and that, and says “H’m! so ’tis. Well, what’s *he* good for?”

“Well,” Smiley says, easy and careless, “he’s good enough for *one* thing, I should judge: he can outjump any frog in Calaveras County.”

The feller took the box again, and took another long, particular look, and give it back to Smiley, and says, very deliberate, “Well, I don’t see no p’int about that frog that’s any better’n any other frog.”

“Maybe you don’t” Smiley says. “Maybe you understand frogs, and maybe you don’t understand ’em; maybe you’ve had experience, and maybe you ain’t—only a amature, as it were. Anyways I’ve got *my* opinion, and I’ll risk forty dollars that he can outjump any frog in Calaveras County.”

And the feller studied a minute, and then says, kinder sad like, “Well, I’m only a stranger here, and I ain’t got no frog; but if I had a frog, I’d bet you.”

And then Smiley says, “That’s all right—that’s all right: if you’ll hold my box a minute, I’ll go and get you a frog.” And so the feller took the box, and put up his forty dollars along with Smiley’s, and set down to wait.

So he set there a good while, thinking and thinking to himself, and then he got the frog out and prised his mouth open and took a teaspoon and filled him full of quail shot—filled him pretty near up to his chin—and set him on the floor. Smiley he went to the swamp

and slopped around in the mud for a long time, and finally he ketched a frog, and fetched him in, and give him to this feller, and says—

“Now, if you’re ready, set him alongside of Dan’l, with his forepaws just even with Dan’l, and I’ll give the word.”

Then he says, “One—two—three—jump !” and him and the feller touched up the frogs from behind, and the new frog hopped off, but Dan’l gave a heave, and h’isted up his shoulders—so—like a Frenchman but it wa’n’t no use; he couldn’t budge; he was planted as solid as an anvil, and he couldn’t no more stir than if he was anchored out. Smiley was a good deal surprised, and he was disgusted too, but he didn’t have no idea what the matter was, of course.

The feller took the money and started away; and when he was going out at the door he sorter jerked his thumb over his shoulder—this way—at Dan’l, and says again, very deliberate, “Well, I don’t see no p’int about that frog that’s any better’n any other frog.”

Smiley he stood scratching his head and looking down at Dan’l a long time, and at last he says: “I do wonder what in the nation that frog throwed off for. I wonder if there ain’t something the matter with him: he ’pears to look mighty baggy, somehow.” And he ketched Dan’l by the nape of the neck, and lifted him up, and says, “Why, blame my cats, if he don’t weigh five pound !” and turned him upside down, and he belched out a double handful of shot. And then he see how it was, and he was the maddest man—he set the frog down and took out after that feller, but he never ketched him. And—

(Here Simon Wheeler heard his name called from the front yard, and got up to see what was wanted.) and turning to me as he moved away, he said, “Just set where you are, stranger, and rest easy; I ain’t going to be gone a second.”

But, by your leave, I did not think that a continuation of the history of the enterprising vagabond *Jim Smiley* would be likely to afford me much information concerning the Rev. *Leonidas W. Smiley*, and so I started away.

At the door I met the sociable Wheeler returning, and he buttonholed me and recommenced—

“Well, this yer Smiley had a yaller one-eyed cow that didn’t have no tail, only just a short stump like a bannanner, and —” •

“Oh, hang Smiley and his afflicted cow!” I muttered good-naturedly; and, bidding the old gentleman good-day, I departed.

#### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. “Mark Twain” was the pen-name adopted by Samuel Langhorne Clemens, a popular American humourist who was born in 1835. Perhaps you have already read his *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. If not, try to get the book and compare it with *Wee Macgreegor*.
2. This story gives you a good opportunity of criticism. How does it begin? Is there any particular reason why you have to wait so long before coming to the frog? Do you think the ending is good?
3. Does the humour depend altogether on the various events in the history of Jim Smiley, or does the manner of the telling count?
4. Would the old man’s yarn be as effective if it were put into good English? Try it and see.
5. What is the point in this remark: “I let him go on in his own way, and never interrupted him once”?
6. Give some examples of American slang used here. When is slang permitted in a story?
7. Would you call Smiley a sportsman?
8. Describe Simon Wheeler in a single sentence.

## 11. A FIGHT WITH A CANNON

(VICTOR HUGO)

A FRIGHTFUL thing had just happened !

One of the carronades of the battery, a twenty-four-pounder, had got loose.

This is perhaps the most formidable of ocean accidents. Nothing more terrible can happen to a vessel in open sea and under full sail.

A gun that breaks its moorings becomes suddenly some indescribable supernatural beast. It is a machine which transforms itself into a monster. This mass turns upon its wheels, has the rapid movements of a billiard ball ; rolls with the rolling, pitches with the pitching ; goes, comes, pauses, seems to meditate ; resumes its course, rushes along the ship from end to end like an arrow, circles about, springs aside, evades, rears, breaks, kills, exterminates. It is a battering-ram which assaults a wall at its own caprice. Moreover, the battering-ram is of metal, the wall wood. It is the entrance of matter into space. One might say that this eternal slave avenges itself. It seems as if the power of evil hidden in what we call inanimate objects finds a vent and bursts suddenly out. It has an air of having lost patience, of seeking some fierce, obscure retribution ; nothing more inexorable than this rage of the inanimate. The mad mass has the bounds of a panther, the weight of the elephant, the agility of the mouse, the obstinacy of the axe, the unexpectedness of the surge, the rapidity of lightning, the deafness of the tomb. It weighs ten thousand pounds, and it rebounds like a child's ball. Its flight is a wild whirl abruptly cut at right angles. What is to be done ? How to end this ? A tempest ceases, a cyclone passes, a wind falls, a broken mast is replaced

a leak is stopped, a fire dies out; but how to control this enormous brute of bronze? In what way can one attack it?

You can make a mastiff hear reason, astound a bull, fascinate a boa, frighten a tiger, soften a lion; but there is no resource with that monster, a cannon let loose. You cannot kill it—it is dead; at the same time it lives. It lives with a sinister life bestowed on it by Infinity.

The planks beneath it give it play. It is moved by the ship, which is moved by the sea, which is moved by the wind. This destroyer is a plaything. The ship, the waves, the blasts, all aid it; hence its frightful vitality. How to assail this fury of complication? How to fetter this monstrous mechanism for wrecking a ship? How foresee its comings and goings, its returns, its stops, its shocks? Any one of these blows upon the sides may stave out the vessel. How divine its awful gyrations? One has to deal with a projectile which thinks, seems to possess ideas, and which changes its direction at each instant. How stop the course of something which must be avoided? The horrible cannon flings itself about: advances, recoils, strikes to the right, strikes to the left, flees, passes, disconcerts ambushes, breaks down obstacles, crushes men like flies. The great danger of the situation is in the mobility of its base. How combat an inclined plane which has caprices? The ship, so to speak, has lightning imprisoned in it which seeks to escape; it is like thunder rolling above an earthquake.

In an instant the whole crew were on foot. The fault was the chief gunner's: he had neglected to fix home the screw-nut of the mooring-chain, and had so badly shackled the four wheels of the carronade that the play given to the sole and frame had separated the platform, and ended by breaking the breeching. The cordage had broken, so that the gun was no longer secure on the carriage. The stationary breeching

which prevents recoil was not in use at that period. As a heavy wave struck the port, the carronade, weakly attached, recoiled, burst its chain, and began to rush wildly about. Conceive, in order to have an idea of this strange sliding, a drop of water running down a pane of glass

At the moment when the lashings gave way the gunners were in the battery, some in groups, others standing alone, occupied with such duties as sailors perform in expectation of the command to clear for action. The carronade, hurled forward by the pitching, dashed into this knot of men and crushed four at the first blow ; then, flung back and shot out anew by the rolling, it cut in two a fifth poor fellow, glanced off to the larboard side and struck a piece of the battery with such force as to unship it. Then rose the cry of distress which had been heard. The men rushed towards the ladder ; the gun-deck emptied in the twinkling of an eye. The enormous cannon was left alone. She was given up to herself. She was her own mistress, and mistress of the vessel. She could do what she willed with both. This whole crew, accustomed to laugh in battle, trembled now. To describe the universal terror would be impossible.

Captain Boisberthelot and Lieutenant La Vieuville, although both intrepid men, stopped at the head of the stairs, and remained mute, pale, hesitating, looking down on the deck. Some one pushed them aside with his elbow and descended.

It was their passenger—the peasant—the man of whom they had been speaking a moment before.

When he reached the foot of the ladder he stood still.

The cannon came and went along the deck. One might have fancied it the living chariot of the Apocalypse. The marine lantern oscillating from the ceiling added a dizzying whirl of lights and shadows to this vision. The shape of the cannon was undistinguish-



able from the rapidity of its course; now it looked black in the light, now it cast weird reflections through the gloom.

It kept on its work of destruction. It had already shattered four other pieces, and dug two crevices in the side, fortunately above the water-line, though they would leak in case a squall should come on. It dashed itself frantically against the framework. The solid tie-beams resisted, their curved form giving them great strength; but they creaked ominously under the assaults of this terrible club, which seemed endowed with a sort of appalling ubiquity, striking on every side at once. The strokes of a bullet shaken in a bottle would not be madder or more rapid. The four wheels passed and repassed above the dead men, cut, carved, slashed them, till the five corpses were a score of stumps rolling about the deck; the heads seemed to cry out; streams of blood twisted in and out the planks with every pitch of the vessel. The ceiling, damaged in several places, began to gape. The whole ship was filled with the awful tumult.

The captain promptly recovered his composure, and at his order the sailors threw down into the deck everything which could deaden and check the mad rush of the gun—mattresses, hammocks, spare sails, coils of rope, extra equipments, and the bales of false assignats of which the corvette carried a whole cargo; an infamous deception which the English considered a fair trick in war.

But what could these rags avail? No one dared descend to arrange them in any useful fashion, and in a few instants they were mere heaps of lint.

There was just sea enough to render the accident as complete as possible. A tempest would have been desirable; it might have thrown the gun upside down, and the four wheels once in the air, the monster could have been mastered. But the devastation increased. There were gashes and even fractures in the masts,

which, embedded in the woodwork of the keel, pierce the decks of ships like great round pillars. The mizzen-mast was cracked, and the mainmast itself was injured under the convulsive blows of the gun. The battery was being destroyed. Ten pieces out of the thirty were disabled; the breaches multiplied in the side, and the corvette began to take in water.

The old passenger, who had descended to the gun-deck, looked like a form of stone stationed at the foot of the stairs. He stood motionless, gazing sternly about upon the devastation. Indeed, it seemed impossible to take a single step forward.

Each bound of the liberated carronade menaced the destruction of the vessel. A few minutes more and shipwreck would be inevitable.

The must perish or put a summary end to the disaster—a decision must be made; but how?

What a combatant—this cannon! They must check this mad monster. They must seize this flash of lightning. They must overthrow this thunderbolt.

Boisberthelot said to La Vieuville, "Do you believe in God, chevalier?"

La Vieuville replied, "Yes—no—sometimes."

"In a tempest?"

"Yes, and in moments like this."

"Only God can aid us here," said Boisberthelot.

All were silent—the cannon kept up its horrible fracas.

The waves beat against the ship; their blows from without responded to the strokes of the cannon.

It was like two hammers alternating.

Suddenly into the midst of this sort of inaccessible circus, where the escaped cannon leaped and bounded, there sprang a man with an iron bar in his hand. It was the author of this catastrophe, the gunner whose culpable negligence had caused the accident—the captain of the gun. Having been the means of bringing about the misfortune, he desired to repair it. He had

caught up a handspike in one fist, a tiller-rope with a slipping noose in the other, and jumped down into the gun-deck. Then a strange combat began, a titanic strife—the struggle of the gun against the gunner; a battle between matter and intelligence; a duel between the inanimate and the human.

The man was posted in an angle, the bar and rope in his two fists; backed against one of the riders, settled firmly on his legs as on two pillars of steel; livid, calm, tragic, rooted as it were in the planks, he waited.

He waited for the cannon to pass near him.

The gunner knew his piece, and it seemed to him that she must recognize her master. He had lived a long while with her. How many times he had thrust his hand between her jaws! It was his tame monster. He began to address it as he might have done his dog.

"Come!" said he. Perhaps he loved it.

He seemed to wish that it would turn towards him.

But to come towards him would be to spring upon him. Then he would be lost. How to avoid its crush? There was the question. All stared in terrified silence.

Not a breast respired freely, except perchance that of the old man who alone stood in the deck with the two combatants, a stern second.

He might himself be crushed by the piece. He did not stir.

Beneath them the blind sea directed the battle.

At the instant when, accepting this awful hand-to-hand contest, the gunner approached to challenge the cannon, some chance fluctuation of the waves kept it for a moment immovable as if suddenly stupefied.

"Come on!" the man said to it. It seemed to listen.

Suddenly it darted upon him. The gunner avoided the shock.

The struggle began—struggle unheard of—the fra-

gile matching itself against the invulnerable ; the thing of flesh attacking the brazen brute ; on the one side blind force, on the other a soul.

The whole passed in a half-light. It was like the indistinct vision of a miracle.

A soul—strange thing ; but you would have said that the cannon had one also—a soul filled with rage and hatred. This blindness appeared to have eyes. The monster had the air of watching the man. There was—one might have fancied so at least—cunning in this mass. It also chose its moment. It became some gigantic insect of metal, having, or seeming to have, the will of a demon. Sometimes this colossal grasshopper would strike the low ceiling of the gun-deck, then fall back on its four wheels like a tiger upon its four claws, and dart anew on the man. He, supple, agile, adroit, would glide away like a snake from the reach of these lightning-like movements. He avoided the encounters ; but the blows which he escaped fell upon the vessel, and continued the havoc

An end of broken chain remained attached to the carronade. This chain had twisted itself, one could not tell how, about the screw of the breech-button. One extremity of the chain was fastened to the carriage. The other, hanging loose, whirled wildly about the gun, and added to the danger of its blows.

The screw held it like a clenched hand, and the chain, multiplying the strokes of the battering-ram by its strokes of a thong, made a fearful whirlwind about the cannon—a whip of iron in a fist of brass. This chain complicated the battle.

Nevertheless the man fought. Sometimes, even, it was the man who attacked the cannon. He crept along the side, bar and rope in hand, and the cannon had the air of understanding, and fled as if it perceived a snare. The man pursued it, formidable, fearless.

Such a duel could not last long. The gun seemed suddenly to say to itself, "Come, we must make an end!" and it paused. One felt the approach of the crisis. The cannon, as if in suspense, appeared to have, or had—because it seemed to all a sentient being—a furious premeditation. It sprang unexpectedly upon the gunner. He jumped aside, let it pass, and cried out with a laugh, "Try again!" The gun, as if in a fury, broke a carronade to larboard; then, seized anew by the invisible sling which held it, was flung to starboard towards the man, who escaped.

Three carronades gave way under the blows of the gun; then, as if blind and no longer conscious of what it was doing, it turned its back on the man, rolled from the stern to the bow, bruising the stem and making a breach in the plankings of the prow. The gunner had taken refuge at the foot of the stairs, a few steps from the old man, who was watching.

The gunner held his handspike in rest. The cannon seemed to perceive him, and, without taking the trouble to turn itself, backed upon him with the quickness of an axe-stroke. The gunner, if driven back against the side, was lost. The crew uttered a simultaneous cry.

But the old passenger, until now immovable, made a spring more rapid than all those wild whirls. He seized a bale of the false assignats, and at the risk of being crushed, succeeded in flinging it between the wheels of the carronade. This manœuvre, decisive and dangerous, could not have been executed with more adroitness and precision by a man trained to all the exercises set down in Durosels's *Manual of Sea Gunnery*.

The bale had the effect of a plug. A pebble may stop a log, a tree branch turn an avalanche. The carronade stumbled. The gunner, in his turn, seizing this terrible chance, plunged his iron bar between the spokes of one of the hind wheels. The cannon

was stopped. It staggered. The man, using the bar as a lever, rocked it to and fro. The heavy mass turned over with a clang like a falling bell, and the gunner, dripping with sweat, rushed forward headlong and passed the slipping noose of the tiller-rope about the bronze neck of the overthrown monster.

It was ended. The man had conquered. The ant had subdued the mastodon; the pigmy had taken the thunderbolt prisoner.

The marines and the sailors clapped their hands.

The whole crew hurried down with cables and chains, and in an instant the cannon was securely lashed.

The gunner saluted the passenger.

"Sir," he said to him, "you have saved my life."

The old man had resumed his impassible attitude, and did not reply.

The man had conquered, but one might say that the cannon had conquered also. Immediate shipwreck had been avoided, but the corvette was by no means saved. The dilapidation of the vessel seemed irremediable. The sides had five breaches, one of which, very large, was in the bow. Out of the thirty carronades, twenty lay useless in their frames.

The carronade, which had been captured and re-chained, was itself disabled; the screw of the breech-button was forced, and the levelling of the piece impossible in consequence. The battery was reduced to nine pieces. The hold had sprung a leak. It was necessary at once to repair the damages and set the pumps to work.

The gun-deck, now that one had time to look about it, offered a terrible spectacle. The interior of a mad elephant's cage could not have been more completely dismantled.

However great the necessity that the corvette should escape observation, a still more imperious necessity presented itself—immediate safety. It



had been necessary to light up the deck by lanterns placed here and there along the sides.

But during the whole time this tragic diversion had lasted the crew were so absorbed by the one question of life or death that they noticed little what was passing outside the scene of the duel. The fog had thickened; the weather had changed; the wind had driven the vessel at will; it had got out of its route, in plain sight of Jersey and Guernsey, farther to the south than it ought to have gone, and was surrounded by a troubled sea. The great waves kissed the gaping wounds of the corvette—kisses full of peril. The sea rocked her menacingly. The breeze became a gale. A squall, a tempest perhaps, threatened. It was impossible to see before one four oars' length.

While the crew were repairing summarily and in haste the ravages of the gun-deck, stopping the leaks and putting back into position the guns which had escaped the disaster, the old passenger had gone on deck.

He stood with his back against the mainmast.

He had paid no attention to a proceeding which had taken place on the vessel. The Chevalier La Vieuville had drawn up the marines in line on either side of the mainmast, and at the whistle of the boatswain the sailors busy in the rigging stood upright on the yards.

Count du Boisberthelot advanced towards the passenger. Behind the captain marched a man haggard, breathless, his dress in disorder, yet wearing a satisfied look under it all. It was the gunner who had just now so opportunely shown himself a tamer of monsters, and who had got the better of the cannon.

The Count made a military salute to the unknown in peasant garb, and said to him, "General, here is the man."

The gunner held himself erect, his eyes downcast, standing in a soldierly attitude.

Count du Boisberthelot continued, "General, taking into consideration what this man has done, do you not think there is something for his commanders to do?"

"I think there is," said the old man.

"Be good enough to give the orders," returned Boisberthelot.

"It is for you to give them. You are the captain."

"But you are the general," answered Boisberthelot.

The old man looked at the gunner. "Approach," said he.

The gunner moved forward a step. The old man turned towards Count du Boisberthelot, detached the cross of Saint Louis from the captain's uniform, and fastened it on the jacket of the gunner.

"Hurrah!" cried the sailors.

The marines presented arms. The old passenger, pointing with his finger towards the bewildered gunner, added, "Now let that man be shot."

Stupor succeeded the applause.

Then, in the midst of a silence like that of the tomb, the old man raised his voice. He said:

"A negligence has endangered this ship. At this moment she is perhaps lost. To be at sea is to face the enemy. A vessel at open sea is an army which gives battle. The tempest conceals, but does not absent itself. The whole sea is an ambushade. Death is the penalty of any fault committed in the face of the enemy. No fault is reparable. Courage ought to be rewarded and negligence punished."

These words fell one after the other slowly, solemnly, with a sort of inexorable measure, like the blows of an axe upon an oak.

And the old man, turning to the soldiers, added, "Do your duty."

The man upon whose breast shone the cross of Saint Louis bowed his head.

At a sign from Count du Boisberthelot, two sailors

descended between decks, then returned, bringing the hammock winding-sheet. The ship's chaplain, who since the time of sailing had been at prayer in the officers' quarters, accompanied the two sailors; a sergeant detached from the line twelve marines, whom he arranged in two ranks, six by six; the gunner, without uttering a word, placed himself between the two files. The chaplain, crucifix in hand, advanced and stood near him.

"March!" said the sergeant.

The platoon moved with slow steps towards the bow. The two sailors who carried the shroud followed.

A gloomy silence fell upon the corvette. A hurricane moaned in the distance.

A few instants later there was a flash; a report followed, echoing among the shadows; then all was silent; then came the thud of a body falling into the sea.

The old passenger still leaned back against the mainmast with folded arms, thinking silently.

#### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. *Ninety-Three* is a long romance by a noted French writer named Victor Hugo, whose powers of description are well represented in this episode. You will probably need your dictionary for some of the long words, but they are worth studying because they are used so effectively. For example, note what a wonderful vocabulary the author has at his command in describing the gun.
2. Why would you call this a vivid narrative? How is the cannon made to live?
3. What is the most striking feature in the character of the old man? Show how he is brought into the story for purposes of *contrast*.
4. "The cannon is the real hero." Do you agree?
5. Does the end come as a complete surprise, or does the author prepare you for it?

6. Quote some striking illustrations of the destructive power of the gun.
7. Give arguments for and against the execution of the gunner.
8. Compare this "fight" with any other in the book. Would you call it an unequal contest ?

## 12. THE CONJURER

(MRS. GASKELL)

LATE in November I received a letter from Miss Matty ; and a very mysterious letter it was. She began many sentences without ending them, running them one into another, in much the same confused sort of way in which written words run together on blotting-paper. All I could make out was that, if my father was better (which she hoped he was), and would take warning and wear a greatcoat from Michaelmas to Lady Day, if turbans were in fashion, could I tell her ? Such a piece of gaiety was going to happen as had not been seen or known of since Wombwell's lions came, when one of them ate a little child's arm ; and she was, perhaps, too old to care about dress, but a new cap she must have ; and, having heard that turbans were worn, and some of the county families likely to come, she would like to look tidy, if I would bring her a cap from the milliner I employed ; and oh, dear ! how careless of her to forget that she wrote to beg I would come and pay her a visit next Tuesday ; when she hoped to have something to offer me in the way of amusement, which she would not now more particularly describe, only sea-green was her favourite colour. So she ended her letter ; but in a P.S. she added, she thought she might as well tell me what was the peculiar attraction to Carnford just

now; Signor Brunoni was going to exhibit his wonderful magic in the Cranford Assembly Rooms on Wednesday and Friday evening in the following week.

I was very glad to accept the invitation from my dear Miss Matty, independently of the conjurer, and most particularly anxious to prevent her from disfiguring her small, gentle, mousey face with a great Saracen's head turban; and accordingly I brought her a pretty, neat, middle-aged cap, which, however, was rather a disappointment to her when, on my arrival, she followed me into my bedroom, ostensibly to poke the fire, but in reality, I do believe, to see if the sea-green turban was not inside the cap-box with which I had travelled. It was in vain that I twirled the cap round on my hand to exhibit back and side fronts: her heart had been set upon a turban, and all she could do was to say, with resignation in her look and voice:

"I am sure you did your best, my dear. It is just like the caps all the ladies in Cranford are wearing, and they have had theirs for a year, I dare say. I should have liked something newer, I confess—something more like the turbans Miss Betty Barker tells me Queen Adelaide wears; but it is very pretty, my dear. And I dare say lavender will wear better than sea-green. Well, after all, what is dress, that we should care about it? You'll tell me if you want anything, my dear. Here is the bell. I suppose turbans have not got down to Drumble yet?"

So saying, the dear old lady gently bemoaned herself out of the room, leaving me to dress for the evening, when, as she informed me, she expected Miss Pole and Mrs. Forrester, and she hoped I should not feel myself too much tired to join the party. Of course I should not; and I made some haste to unpack and arrange my dress; but, with all my speed, I heard the arrivals and the buzz of conversation in

the next room before I was ready. Just as I opened the door, I caught the words, "I was foolish to expect anything very genteel out of the Drumble shops; poor girl! she did her best, I've no doubt." But, for all that, I had rather that she blamed Drumble and me than disfigured herself with a turban.

Miss Pole was always the person, in the trio of Cranford ladies now assembled, to have had adventures. She was in the habit of spending the morning in rambling from shop to shop, not to purchase anything (except an occasional reel of cotton, or a piece of tape), but to see the new articles and report upon them, and to collect all the stray pieces of intelligence in the town. She had a way, too, of demurely popping hither and thither into all sorts of places to gratify her curiosity on any point—a way which, if she had not looked so very genteel and prim, might have been considered impertinent. And now, by the expressive way in which she cleared her throat, and waited for all minor subjects (such as caps and turbans) to be cleared off the course, we knew she had something very particular to relate, when the due pause came—and I defy any people, possessed of common modesty, to keep up a conversation long, where one among them sits up aloft in silence, looking down upon all the things they chance to say as trivial and contemptible compared to what they could disclose, if properly entreated. Miss Pole began :

"As I was stepping out of Gordon's shop to-day, I chanced to go into the 'George' (my Betty has a second-cousin who is chambermaid there, and I thought Betty would like to hear how she was), and, not seeing any one about, I strolled up the staircase, and found myself in the passage leading to the Assembly Room (you and I remember the Assembly Room, I am sure, Miss Matty! and the minuets de la cour!); so I went on, not thinking of what I was about, when, all at once, I perceived that I was in the



middle of the preparations for to-morrow night—the room being divided with great clothes-maids, over which Crosby's men were tacking red flannel; very dark and odd it seemed; it quite bewildered me, and I was going on behind the screens, in my absence of mind, when a gentleman (quite the gentleman, I can assure you) stepped forward and asked if I had any business he could arrange for me. He spoke such pretty broken English, I could not help thinking of Thaddeus of Warsaw, and the Hungarian Brothers, and Santo Sebastiani; and while I was busy picturing his past life to myself, he had bowed me out of the room. But wait a minute! You have not heard half my story yet! I was going downstairs, when who should I meet but Betty's second-cousin. So, of course, I stopped to speak to her for Betty's sake; and she told me that I had really seen the conjurer—the gentleman who spoke broken English was Signor Brunoni himself. Just at this moment he passed us on the stairs, making such a graceful bow! in reply to which I dropped a curtsy—all foreigners have such polite manners, one catches something of it. But, when he had gone downstairs, I bethought me that I had dropped my glove in the Assembly Room (it was safe in my muff all the time, but I never found it till afterwards); so I went back, and just as I was creeping up the passage left on one side of the great screen that goes nearly across the room, who should I see but the very same gentleman that had met me before, and passed me on the stairs, coming now forwards from the inner part of the room, to which there is no entrance—you remember, Miss Matty—and just repeating, in his pretty broken English, the inquiry if I had any business there—I don't mean that he put it quite so bluntly, but he seemed very determined that I should not pass the screen—so, of course, I explained about my glove, which, curiously enough, I found at that very moment."

Miss pole, then, had seen the conjurer—the real, live conjurer! and numerous were the questions we all asked her. “Had he a beard?” “Was he young or old?” “Fair or dark?” “Did he look?”—(unable to shape my question prudently, I put it in another form)—“How did he look?” In short, Miss Pole was the heroine of the evening, owing to her morning’s encounter. If she was not the rose (that is to say, the conjurer), she had been near it.

Conjuration, sleight of hand, magic, witchcraft, were the subjects of the evening. Miss Pole was slightly sceptical, and inclined to think there might be a scientific solution found for even the proceedings of the Witch of Endor. Mrs. Forrester believed everything, from ghosts to death-watches. Miss Matty ranged between the two—always convinced by the last speaker. I think she was naturally more inclined to Mrs. Forrester’s side, but a desire of proving herself a worthy sister to Miss Jenkyns kept her equally balanced—Miss Jenkyns, who would never allow a servant to call the little rolls of tallow that formed themselves round candles “winding-sheets,” but insisted on their being spoken of as “roleypoleys!” A sister of hers to be superstitious! It would never do.

After tea, I was dispatched downstairs into the dining-parlour for that volume of the old Encyclopædia which contained the nouns beginning with C, in order that Miss Pole might prime herself with scientific explanations for the tricks of the following evening. It spoilt the pool at preference which Miss Matty and Mrs. Forrester had been looking forward to, for Miss Pole became so absorbed in her subject, and the plates by which it was illustrated, that we felt it would be cruel to disturb her otherwise than by one or two well-timed yawns, which I threw in now and then, for I was really touched by the meek way in which the two ladies were bearing their disappointment.

But Miss Pole only read the more zealously, imparting to us no more interesting information than this :

"Ah ! I see ; I comprehend perfectly. A represents the ball. Put A between B and D—no ! between C and F, and turn the second joint of the third finger of your left hand over the wrist of your right H. Very clear indeed ! My dear Mrs. Forrester, conjuring and witchcraft is a mere affair of the alphabet. Do let me read you this one passage !"

Mrs. Forrester implored Miss Pole to spare her, saying, from a child upwards, she never could understand being read aloud to ; and I dropped the pack of cards, which I had been shuffling very audibly, and by this discreet movement I obliged Miss Pole to perceive that preference was to have been the order of the evening, and to propose, rather unwillingly, that the pool should commence. The pleasant brightness that stole over the other two ladies' faces on this ! Miss Matty had one or two twinges of self-reproach for having interrupted Miss Pole in her studies : and did not remember her cards well, or give her full attention to the game, untill she had soothed her conscience by offering to lend the volume of the *Encyclopædia* to Miss Pole, who accepted it thankfully, and said Betty should take it home when she came with the lantern.

The next evening we were all in little gentle flutter at the idea of the gaiety before us. Miss Matty went up to dress betimes, and hurried me until I was ready, when we found we had an hour and a half to wait before the "doors opened at seven precisely." And we had only twenty yards to go ! However, as Miss Matty said, it would not do to get too much absorbed in anything, and forget the time ; so she thought we had better sit quietly, without lighting the candles, till five minutes to seven. So Miss Matty dozed, and I knitted.

At length we set off ; and at the door, under the carriage way at the "George," we met Mrs. Forrester

and Miss Pole: the latter was discussing the subject of the evening with more vehemence than ever, and throwing A's and B's at our heads like hailstones. She had even copied one or two of the "receipts"—as she called them—for the different tricks, on backs of letters, ready to explain and to detect Signor Brunoni's arts.

We went into the cloakroom adjoining the Assembly Room; Miss Matty gave a sigh or two to her departed youth, and the remembrance of the last time she had been there, as she adjusted her pretty new cap before the strange, quaint old mirror in the cloakroom. The Assembly Room had been added to the inn, about a hundred years before, by the different country families, who met together there once a month during the winter to dance and play at cards. Many a county beauty had first swum through the minuet that she afterwards danced before Queen Charlotte in this very room. It was said that one of the Gunnings had graced the apartment with her beauty; it was certain that a rich and beautiful widow, Lady Williams, had here been smitten with the noble figure of a young artist, who was staying with some family in the neighbourhood for professional purposes, and accompanied his patrons to the Cranford Assembly. And a pretty bargain poor Lady Williams had of her handsome husband, if all tales were true. Now, no beauty blushed and dimpled along the sides of the Cranford Assembly Room; no handsome artist won hearts by his bow, *chapeau bras* in hand; the old room was dingy; the salmon-coloured paint had faded into a drab; great pieces of plaster had chipped off from the white wreaths and festoons on its walls; but still a mouldy odour of aristocracy lingered about the place, and a dusty recollection of the days that were gone made Miss Matty and Mrs. Forrester bridle up as they entered, and walk mincingly up the room, as if there were a number of genteel observers, instead of two little boys with a stick

of toffee between them with which to beguile the time.

We stopped short at the second front row; I could hardly understand why, until I heard Miss Pole ask a stray waiter if any of the county families were expected; and when he shook his head, and believed not, Mrs. Forrester and Miss Maity moved forwards, not our party represented a conversational square. The front row was soon augmented and enriched by Lady Glenmire and Mrs. Jamieson. We six occupied the two front rows, and our aristocratic seclusion was respected by the groups of shopkeepers who strayed in from time to time and huddled together on the back benches. At least I conjectured so, from the noise they made and the sonorous bumps they gave in sitting down: but when, in weariness of the obstinate green curtain that would not draw up, but would stare at me with two odd eyes, seen through holes, as in the old tapestry story, I would fain have looked round at the merry chattering people behind me, Miss Pole clutched my arm, and begged me not to turn, for "it was not the thing." What "the thing" was I never could find out, but it must have been something eminently dull and tiresome. However, we all sat eyes right, square front, gazing at the tantalizing curtain, and hardly speaking intelligibly, we were so afraid of being caught in the vulgarity of making any noise in a place of public amusement. Mrs. Jamieson was the most fortunate, for she fell asleep.

At length the eyes disappeared—the curtain quivered—one side went up before the other, which stuck fast; it was dropped again, and, with a fresh effort, and a vigorous pull from some unseen hand, it flew up, revealing to our sight a magnificent gentlemen in the Turkish costume, seated before a little table, gazing at us (I should have said with the same eyes that I had last seen through the hole in the curtain) with calm and condescending dignity, "like a being of another

sphere," as I heard a sentimental voice ejaculate behind me.

"That's not Signor Brunoni!" said Miss Pole decidedly: and so audibly that I am sure he heard, for he glanced down over his flowing beard at our party with an air of mute reproach. "Signor Brunoni had no beard—but perhaps he'll come soon." So she lulled herself into patience. Meanwhile, Miss Matty had reconnoitred through her eyeglass, wiped it, and looked again. Then she turned round, and said to me, in a kind, mild, sorrowful tone:

"You see, my dear, turbans *are* worn."

But we had no time for more conversation. The Grand Turk, as Miss Pole chose to call him, arose and announced himself as Signor Brunoni.

"I don't believe him!" exclaimed Miss Pole, in a defiant manner. He looked at her again, with the same dignified upbraiding in his countenance. "I don't!" she repeated more positively than ever. "Signor Brunoni had not got that muffy sort of thing about his chin, but looked like a close-shaved Christian gentleman."

Miss Pole's energetic speeches had the good effect of wakening up Mrs. Jamieson, who opened her eyes wide in sign of the deepest attention—a proceeding which silenced Miss Pole and encouraged the Grand Turk to proceed, which he did in very broken English—so broken that there was no cohesion between the parts of his sentences, a fact which he himself perceived at last, and so left off speaking and proceeded to action.

Now we *were* astonished. How he did his tricks I could not imagine; no, not even when Miss Pole pulled out her pieces of paper and began reading aloud—or, at least, in a very audible whisper—the separate "receipts" for the most common of his tricks. If ever I saw a man frown and look enraged, I saw the Grand Turk frown at Miss Pole; but, as she said, what could be expected but unchristian looks from a Mussulman?



If Miss Pole were sceptical, and more engrossed with her receipts and diagrams than with his tricks, Miss Matty and Mrs. Forrester were mystified and perplexed to the highest degree. Mrs. Jamieson kept taking her spectacles off and wiping them, as if she thought it was something defective in them which made the legerdemain ; and Lady Glenmire, who had seen many curious sights in Edinburgh, was very much struck with the tricks, and would not at all agree with Miss Pole, who declared that anybody could do them with a little practice, and that she would, herself, undertake to do all he did, with two hours given to study the Encyclopædia, and make her third finger flexible.

At last Miss Matty and Mrs. Forrester became perfectly awestricken. They whispered together. I sat just behind them, so I could not help hearing what they were saying. Miss Matty asked Mrs. Forrester "if she thought it was quite right to have come to see such things? She could not help fearing they were lending encouragement to something that was not quite—" A little shake of the head filled up the blank. Mrs. Forrester replied, that the same thought had crossed her mind ; she, too, was feeling very uncomfortable, it was so very strange. She was quite certain that it was her pocket-handkerchief which was in that loaf just now ; and it had been in her own hand not five minutes before. She wondered who had furnished the bread ? She was sure it could not be Dakin, because he was the churchwarden. Suddenly Miss Matty half turned towards me :

"Will you look, my dear—you are a stranger in the town, and it won't give rise to unpleasant reports—will you just look round and see if the rector is here ? If he is, I think we may conclude that this wonderful man is sanctioned by the Church, and that will be a great relief to my mind."

I looked, and I saw the tall, thin, dry, dusty rector, sitting surrounded by National School boys, guarded

by troops of his own sex from any approach of the many Cranford spinsters. His kind face was all agape with broad smiles, and the boys around him were in chinks of laughing. I told Miss Matty that the Church was smiling approval, which set her mind at ease.

I have never named Mr. Hayter, the rector, because I, as a well-to-do and happy young woman, never came in contact with him. He was an old bachelor, but as afraid of matrimonial reports getting abroad about him as any girl of eighteen : and he would rush into a shop, or dive down an entry, sooner than encounter any of the Cranford ladies in the street ; and, as for the preference parties, I did not wonder at his not accepting invitations to them. To tell the truth, I always suspected Miss Pole of having given very vigorous chase to Mr. Hayter when he first came to Cranford ; and not the less because now she appeared to share so vividly in his dread lest her name should ever be coupled with his. He found all his interests among the poor and helpless ; he had treated the National School boys this very night to the performance ; and virtue was for once its own reward, for they guarded him right and left, and clung round him as if he had been the queen-bee and they the swarm. He felt so safe in their environment that he could even afford to give our party a bow as we filed out. Miss Pole ignored his presence, and pretended to be absorbed in convincing us that we had been cheated, and had not seen Signor Brunoni after all.

#### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. *Cranford* is a quiet story about a little country town, in which nothing very exciting happens. So you can understand why the advent of the "conjurer" made such a stir. But the people in the book, although they lead obscure lives, are interesting. How does the author make them so ?

2. Miss Matty's letter helps you to know her. What other impressions can you form of her from this narrative?
3. Miss pole is the character about whom the most is said. Describe her as she would appear to the "conjurer." Would she be a good companion to live with?
4. Why are the Cranford ladies often referred to as *genteel*?
5. Describe this conjuring entertainment in such a manner as to bring it up-to-date. What differences will you need to introduce?
6. Is there any humour in this story? If so, where does it lie?
7. Why is the rector mentioned?
8. Explain the last sentence.

### 13. HOW HEReward WON MARE SWALLOW

(CHARLES KINGSLEY)

ON a bench at the door of his high-roofed wooden house sat Dirk Hammerhand, the richest man in Walcheren. From within the house sounded the pleasant noise of slave-women, grinding and chatting at the handquern; from without, the pleasant noise of geese and fowls without number. And as he sat and drank his ale, and watched the herd of horses in the fen, he thought himself a happy man.

As he looked at the horses, some half-mile off, he saw a strange stir among them. They began whinnying and pawing round a fourfooted thing in the midst, which might be a badger, or a wolf—though both were very uncommon in that pleasant isle of Walcheren—but which plainly had no business there. Whereon he took up a mighty staff, and strode over the fen to see.

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He found neither wolf nor badger; but, to his exceeding surprise, a long lean man, clothed in ragged horse-skins, whinnying and neighing exactly like a horse, and then stooping to eat grass like one. He advanced to do the first thing that came into his head, namely, to break the man's back with his staff, and ask him afterwards who he might be. But ere he could strike, the man or horse kicked up with its hind legs in his face, and then springing on to the said hind legs ran away with extraordinary swiftness some fifty yards; after which it went down on all fours and began grazing again.

"Beest thou man or devil?" cried Dirk, somewhat frightened.

The thing looked up. The face at least was human. "Art thou a Christian man?" asked it in bad Frisian, intermixed with snorts and neighs.

"What's that to thee?" growled Dirk; and began to wish a little that he was one, having heard that the sign of the cross was of great virtue in driving away fiends.

"Thou art not Christian? Thou believest in Thor and Odin? Then there is hope."

"Hope of what?" Dirk was growing more and more frightened.

"Of her, my sister! Ah, my sister, can it be that I shall find thee at last, after ten thousand miles, and seven years of woeful wandering?"

"I have no man's sister here. At least, my wife's brother was killed——"

"I speak not of a sister in woman's shape. Mine, alas!—O woeful prince, O more woeful princess—eats the herb of the field somewhere in the shape of a mare, as ugly as she was once beautiful, but swifter than the swallow on the wing."

"I've none such here," quoth Dirk, thoroughly frightened, and glancing uneasily at mare Swallow.

"You have not? Alas, wretched me! It was

prophesied to me by the witch that I should find her in the field of one who worshipped the old gods ; for had she come across a holy priest, she had been a woman again, long ago. Whither must I wander afresh ?" And the thing began weeping bitterly, and then ate more grass.

"I—that is—thou poor miserable creature," said Dirk, half pityingly, half wishing to turn the subject ; "leave off making a beast of thyself awhile, and tell me who thou art."

"I have made no beast of myself, most noble earl of the Frisians, for so you doubtless are. I was made a beast of—a horse of, by an enchanter of a certain land, and my sister a mare."

"Thou dost not say so !" quoth Dirk, who considered such an event quite possible.

"I was a prince, as fair once as I am foul now, and only less fair than my lost sister ; and by the enchantments of a cruel magician we became what we are."

"But thou art not a horse, at all events ?"

"Am I not ? Thou knowest, then, more of me than I do of myself," and it ate more grass. "But hear the rest of my story. My hapless sister was sold away with me to a merchant ; but I, breaking loose from him, fled until I bathed in a magic fountain. At once I recovered my man's shape, and was rejoicing therein, when out of the fountain rose a fairy more beautiful than an elf, and smiled upon me with love.

"She asked me my story, and I told it. And when it was told—'Wretch !' she cried, 'and coward, who hast deserted thy sister in her need. I would have loved thee, and made the immortal as myself ; but now thou shalt wander ugly and eating grass, clothed in the horse-hide which has just dropped from thy limbs, till thou shalt find thy sister, and bring her to bathe, like thee, in this magic well.'"

"All good spirits help us ! And you are really a prince ?"

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"As surely," cried the thing with a voice of sudden rapture, "as that mare is my sister;" and he rushed at mare Swallow. "I see, I see, my mother's eyes, my father's nose——"

"He must have been a chuckle-headed king that, then," grinned Dirk to himself. "The mare's nose is as big as a buck-basket. But how can she be a princess, man—prince, I mean?"

"Man, man, simple though honest!—Hast thou never heard of the skill of the erchanterers of the East? O my sister, my sister! Dost thou not know me? Dost thou answer my caresses with kicks? Or is thy heart, as well as thy body, so enchained by that cruel necromancer, that thou preferrest to be his, and scornest thine own salvation, leaving me to eat grass till I die?"

"I say, prince—I say—what would you have a man to do? I bought the mare honestly, and I have kept her well. She can't say aught against me on that score. And whether she be princess or not, I'm loth to part with her."

"Keep her then, and keep with her the curse of all the saints and angels. Look down, ye holy saints"—and the thing poured out a long string of saints' names—"and avenge this Catholic princess, kept in vile durance by an unbaptized heathen! May his——"

"Don't, don't!" roared Drik. "And don't look at me like that, or I'll brain you with my staff!"

"Fool! If I have lost a horse's figure I have not lost his swiftness. Ere thou couldst strike, I should have run a mile and back, to curse thee afresh." And the thing ran round him, and fell on all fours again, and ate grass.

"Mercy, mercy! And that is more than I ever

*Buck-basket, A laundry-basket.*



asked yet of man. But it is hard," growled he, "that a man should lose his money, because a rogue sells him a princess in disguise."

"Then sell her again ; sell her, as thou valuest thy life, to the first Christian man thou meetest. And yet no. What matters ? Ere a month be over, the seven years' enchantment will have passed ; and she will return to her own shape, and vanish from thy farm, leaving thee to vain repentance ; whereby thou wilt both lose thy money and get her curse. Farewell, and my malison abide with thee !"

And the thing, without another word, ran right away, neighing as it went, leaving Dirk in a state of abject terror.

The next morning, as Dirk was going about his business with a doleful face, casting stealthy glances at the fen, to see if the mysterious mare was still there, and a chance of his money still left, a man rode up to the door.

He was poorly clothed, with a long rusty sword by his side. A broad felt hat, long boots, and a haversack behind his saddle, showed him to be a traveller, seemingly a horse-dealer ; for there followed him, tied head and tail, a brace of sorry nags.

"Heaven save all here," quoth he, making the sign of the cross. "Can any good Christian give me a drink of milk ?"

"Ale, if thou wilt," said Dirk. "But what art thou, and whence ?"

On any other day he would have tried to coax his guest into trying a buffet with him for his horse and clothes. But this morning his heart was heavy with the thought of the enchanted mare, and he welcomed the chance of selling her to the stranger.

"We are not very fond of strangers about here, since these Flemings have been harrying our borders. If thou art a spy, it will be worse for thee."

"I am neither spy nor Fleming, but a poor servant

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of the Lord Bishop of Utrecht's buying a garron or two for his lordship's priests. As for these Flemings, may St. John Baptist save from them both me and you. Do you know of any man who has horses to sell hereabouts?"

"There are horses in the fen yonder," quoth Dirk, who knew that churchmen were likely to give a liberal price, and pay in good silver.

"I saw them as I rode up. And a fine lot they are; but of too good a stamp for my short purse, or for my holy master's riding—a fat priest likes a quiet nag, my master."

"Humph. Well, if quietness is what you need, there is a mare down there, that a child might ride with a thread of wool. But as for price——"

"Ah!" quoth the horseman. "Well, your Walcheren folk make good milk, that's certain."

The less anxious the dealer seemed to buy, the more anxious grew Dirk to sell; but he concealed his anxiety, and let the stranger turn away thanking him for his drink.

"I say!" he called after him. "You might look at her, as you ride past the herd."

The stranger assented; and they went down into the fen, and looked over the precious mare, whose feats were afterwards sung by many an English fire-side. The ugliest as well as the swiftest of mares she was, and it was not till the stranger had looked twice at her, that he forgot her great chuckle-head, greyhound flanks, and drooping hind-quarters, and began to see the great length of those same quarters, the thighs let down into the hocks, the compact loin, the extraordinary girth through the saddle, the sloping shoulder, the long arms, the flat knees, the large well-set hoofs and all the other points which showed her strength and speed, and justified her fame.

*Garron, A small horse, or nag.*

"She might carry a big man like you through the mud," he said carelessly; "but as for pace, one cannot expect that with such a chuckle-head. And if one rode her through a town, the boys would call after one, 'All head and no tail.' Why, I can't see her tail for her croup, it is so ill set on."

"Ill set on, or none," said Dirk testily, "don't go to speak against her pace till you have seen it. Here, lass!"

Dirk was in his heart rather afraid of the princess; but he was comforted when she came up to him like a dog.

"She's as sensible as a woman," said he; and then grumbled to himself, "maybe she knows I mean to part with her."

"Lend me your saddle," said he to the stranger.

The stranger did so; and Dirk, mounting, galloped her in a ring. There was no doubt of her powers as soon as she began to move.

"Well, she can gallop a bit," said the stranger, as Dirk pulled her up and dismounted; "but an ugly brute she is, nevertheless, and such an one as I should not care to ride, for I am a gay man among the ladies. However, what is your price?"

Dirk named twice as much as he would have taken.

"Half that, you mean." And the usual haggle began.

"Tell thee what," said Dirk at last. "I am a man who has his fancies; and this shall be her price: half thy bid, and a box on the ear."

The demon of covetousness had entered Dirk's heart. What if he got the money, brained, or at least disabled, the stranger, and so had a chance of selling the mare a second time to some fresh comer?

"Thou art a strange fellow," quoth the horse-dealer. "But so be it."

Dirk chuckled. "He does not know," thought he, "that he has to do with Dirk Hammerhand,"

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and he clenched his fist in anticipation of his rough  
joke.

"There," quoth the stranger, counting out the  
money carefully, "is thy coin. And there—is thy  
box on the ear."

And with a blow which rattled over the fen, he  
felled Dirk Hammerhand to the ground.

He lay senseless for a moment, and then looked  
wildly round.

"Villain!" groaned he. "It was I who was to  
give the buffet, not thou!"

"Art mad?" asked the stranger, as he coolly  
picked up the coins, which Dirk had scattered in his  
fall. "It is the seller's business to take, and the  
buyer's to give."

And while Dirk roared in vain for help he leapt on  
Swallow, and rode off shouting:

"Aha! Dirk Hammerhand! So you thought to  
knock a hole in my skull, as you have done to many  
a better man than yourself? He must be a luckier  
man than you who catches The Wake asleep. I shall  
give your love to the enchanted prince, my faithful  
serving-man, whom they call Martin Lightfoot."

Dirk cursed the day he was born. Instead of the  
mare he had got the two wretched garrons which the  
stranger had left, and a face, which made him so  
tender of his own teeth, that he never again offered  
to try a buffet with a stranger.

#### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. This is a story of a stratagem. Do you think it was  
cleverly worked out? If so, why?
2. On what did its success depend?
3. How are you made to sympathize with Hereward  
rather than with Dirk?
4. "Mare Swallow's appearance belied her good quali-  
ties." Explain briefly.
5. Account for Dirk's second name.

6. What do these words mean : necromancer, malison, chuckle-head ?
7. The end of the story ought to suggest an alternative title. What ?
8. The name of the book in which this episode appears is *Hereward the Wake*. Can you suggest why ?

## 14. ELIZA'S ESCAPE

(MRS. H. BEECHER STOWE)

It is impossible to conceive of a human creature more wholly desolate and forlorn than Eliza, when she turned her footsteps from Uncle Tom's cabin.

Her husband's suffering and dangers, and the danger of her child, all blended in her mind with a confused and stunning sense of the risk she was running in leaving the only home she had ever known, and cutting loose from the protection of a friend whom she loved and revered. Then there was the parting from every familiar object—the place where she had grown up, the trees under which she had played, the groves where she had walked many an evening in happier days, by the side of her young husband—everything, as it lay in the clear, frosty starlight, seemed to speak reproachfully to her, and ask her whither could she go from a home like that ?

But stronger than all was maternal love, wrought into a paroxysm of frenzy by the near approach of a fearful danger. Her boy was old enough to have walked by her side, and, in an indifferent case, she would only have led him by the hand ; but now the bare thought of putting him out of her arms made her shudder, and she strained him to her bosom with a convulsive grasp, as she went rapidly forward.

The frosty ground creaked beneath her feet, and she

trembled at the sound ; every quaking leaf and fluttering shadow sent the blood backward to her heart, and quickened her footsteps. She wondered within herself at the strength that seemed to be come upon her ; for she felt the weight of her boy as if it had been a feather, and every flutter of fear seemed to increase the supernatural power that bore her on, while from her pale lips burst forth, in frequent ejaculations, the prayer to a friend above—"Lord, help ! Lord, save me !"

The boundaries of the farm, the grove, the wood-lot, passed by her dizzily, as she walked on ; and still she went, leaving one familiar object after another, slacking not, pausing not, till reddening daylight found her many a long mile from all traces of any familiar objects, upon the open highway.

She had often been with her mistress, to visit some connections, in the little village of T——, not far from the Ohio river, and knew the road well. To go thither, to escape across the Ohio river, were the first hurried outlines of her plan of escape ; beyond that, she could only hope in God.

After a while they came to a thick patch of woodland, through which murmured a clear brook. As the child complained of hunger and thirst, she climbed over the fence with him ; and, sitting down behind a large rock which concealed them from the road, she gave him a breakfast out of her little package. The boy wondered and grieved that she could not eat ; and when, putting his arms round her neck, he tried to wedge some of his cake into her mouth, it seemed to her that the rising in her throat would choke her.

"No, no, Harry darling ! mother can't eat till you are safe ! We must go on—on—till we come to the river !" And she hurried again into the road, and again constrained herself to walk regularly and composedly forward.



She was many miles past any neighbourhood where she was personally known. If she should chance to meet any who knew her, she reflected that the well-known kindness of the family would be of itself a blind to suspicion, as making it an unlikely supposition that she could be a fugitive. As she was also so white as not to be known as of coloured lineage, without a critical survey, and her child was white also, it was much easier for her to pass on unsuspected.

An hour before sunset, she entered the village of T—, by the Ohio river, weary and foot-sore, but still strong in heart. Her first glance was at the river which lay, like Jordan, between her and the Cannon of liberty on the other side.

It was now early spring, and the river was swollen and turbulent; great cakes of floating ice were swinging heavily to and fro in the turbid waters. Owing to the peculiar form of the shore on the Kentucky side, the land bending far out into the water, the ice had been lodged and detained in great quantities, and the narrow channel which swept round the bend was full of ice, piled one cake over another, thus forming a temporary barrier to the descending ice, which lodged, and formed a great, undulating raft, filling up the whole river, and extending almost to the Kentucky shore.

Eliza stood for a moment contemplating this unfavourable aspect of things, which she saw at once must prevent the usual ferry-boat from running, and then turned into a small public-house on the bank, to make a few inquiries.

The hostess, who was busy in various fizzing and stewing operations over the fire, preparatory to the evening meal, stopped, with a fork in her hand, as Eliza's sweet and plaintive voice arrested her.

"What is it?" she said.

"Isn't there any ferry or boat that takes people over to B— now?" she said.

"No, indeed !" said the woman ; "the boats has stopped running."

Eliza's look of dismay and disappointment struck the woman, and she said, inquiringly :

"Maybe you're wanting to get over ?—anybody sick ? Ye seem mighty anxious."

"I've got a child that's very dangerous," said Eliza. "I never heard of it till last night, and I've walked quite a piece to-day, in hopes to get to the ferry."

"Well, now, that's onlucky," said the woman, whose motherly sympathies were much aroused ; "I'm re'lly consarned for ye. Solomon !" she called, from the window, towards a small back building. A man in leather apron and with very dirty hands appeared at the door.

"I say, Sol," said the woman, "is that ar man going to tote them bar'ls over to-night ?"

"He said he should try, if 'twas any way prudent," said the man.

"There's a man a piece down here, that's going over with some truck this evening, if he durs' to ; he'll be in here to supper to-night, so you'd better set down and wait. That's a sweet little fellow," added the woman, offering him a cake.

But the child, wholly exhausted, cried with weariness.

"Poor fellow ! he isn't used to walking, and I've hurried him on so," said Eliza.

"Well, take him into this room," said the woman, opening into a small bedroom, where stood a comfortable bed. Eliza laid the weary boy upon it, and held his hands in hers till he was fast asleep. For her there was no rest. As a fire in her bones, the thought of the pursuers urged her on ; and she gazed with longing eyes on the sullen, surging waters that lay between her and liberty.

Here we must take our leave of her for the present to follow the course of her pursuers.

Though Mrs. Shelby had promised that the dinner should be hurried on table, yet it was soon seen, as the thing has often been seen before, that it required more than one to make a bargain. So, although the order was fairly given out in Haley's hearing, and carried to Aunt Chloe by at least half a dozen juvenile messengers, that dignitary only gave certain very gruff snorts, and tosses of her head, and went on with every operation in an unusually leisurely and circumstantial manner.

Aunt Chloe, who was much revered in the kitchen, was listened to with open mouth; and the dinner being now fairly sent in, the whole kitchen was at leisure to gossip with her, and to listen to her remarks.

"Chil'en!" said a voice that made them all start. It was Uncle Tom, who had come in and stood listening to the conversation at the door.

"Chil'en!" he said, "I'm afeard you don't know what ye're sayin'. Forever is a *dre'ful* word, chil'en; it's awful to think on't. You oughtenter wish that ar to any human crittur."

"We wouldn't to anybody but the soul-drivers," said Andy; "nobody can help wishing it to them, they's so awful wicked."

"Pray for them that 'spitefully use you, the good book says," said Tom.

"Pray for 'em!" said Aunt Chloe; "Lor, it's too tough! I can't pray for 'em."

"It's natur, Chloe, and natur's strong," said Tom, "but the Lord's grace is stronger; besides, you oughter think what an awful state a poor crittur's soul's in that'll do them ar things—you oughter thank God that you an't *like* him, Chloe. I'm sure I'd rather be sold, ten thousand times over, than to have all that ar poor crittur's got to answer for."

The bell here rang, and Tom was summoned to the parlour.

"Tom," said his master kindly, "I want you to

notice that I give this gentleman bonds to forfeit a thousand dollars if you are not on the spot when he wants you; he's going to-day to look after his other business, and you can have the day to yourself. Go anywhere you like, boy."

"Thank you, Mas'r," said Tom.

"And mind yerself," said the trader, "and don't come it over your master with any o' yer nigger tricks; for I'll take every cent out of him, if you an't thar. If he'd hear to me, he wouldn't trust any on ye—slippery as eels!"

"Mas'r," said Tom—and he stood very straight—"I was jist eight years old when ole Missis put you into my arms, and you wasn't a year old. 'Thar,' says she, 'Tom, that's to be *your* young Mas'r; take good care on him,' says she. And now I jist ask you, Mas'r, have I ever broke word to you, or gone contrary to you, 'specially since I was a Christian?"

Mr. Shelby was fairly overcome, and the tears rose to his eyes.

"My good boy," said he, "the Lord knows you say but the truth; and if I was able to help it, all the world shouldn't buy you."

"And sure as I am a Christian woman," said Mrs. Shelby, "you shall be redeemed as soon as I can any way bring together means. Sir," she said to Haley, "take good account of who you sell him to, and let me know."

"Lor', yes; for that matter," said the trader, "I may bring him up in a year, not much the wuss for wear, and trade him back."

"I'll trade with you, then, and make it for your advantage," said Mrs. Shelby.

"Of course," said the trader, "all's equal with me; li'ves trade 'em up as down, so I does a good business. All I want is a livin', you know, ma'am; that's all any on us wants, I s'pose."

Mr. and Mrs. Shelby both felt annoyed and degraded

by the familiar impudence of the trader, and yet both saw the absolute necessity of putting a constraint on their feelings. The more hopelessly sordid and insensible he appeared, the greater became Mrs Shelby's dread of his succeeding in recapturing Eliza and her child, and of course the greater her motive for detaining him by every female artifice. She therefore graciously smiled, assented, chatted familiarly, and did all she could to make time pass imperceptibly.

At two o'clock Sam and Andy brought the horses up to the posts, apparently greatly refreshed and invigorated by the scamper of the morning.

Sam was there new oiled from dinner, with an abundance of zealous and ready officiousness. As Haley approached, he was boasting in flourishing style, to Andy, of the evident and eminent success of the operation, now that he had "farly come to it."

"Your master, I s'pose, don't keep no dogs," said Haley, thoughtfully, as he prepared to mount.

"Heaps on 'em," said Sam triumphantly; "that's Bruno—he's a roarer! and besides that, 'bout every nigger of us keeps a pup of some natur or uther."

"But your master don't keep no dogs ( I pretty much know he don't ) for trackin' out niggers?"

Sam knew exactly what he meant, but he kept on a look of earnest and desperate simplicity.

"Our dogs all smells round consid'able sharp. I 'spect they's the kind, though they han't never had no practice. They's *far* dogs, though, at most anything, if you'd get 'em started. Here, Bruno," he called, whistling to the lumbering Newfoundland, who came pitching tumultuously towards them.

"You go hang!" said Haley, getting up. "Come, tumble up now."

"I shall take the straight road to the river," said Haley decidedly, after they had come to the boundaries of the estate. "I know the way of all of 'em—they makes tracks for the underground."

"Sartin," said Sam, "dat's de idee. Mas'r Haley hits de thing right in de middle. Now, der's two roads to de river—de dirt road and der pike—which Mas'r mean to take?"

Andy looked up innocently at Sam, surprised at hearing this new geographical fact, but instantly confirmed what he said, by a vehement reiteration.

"'Cause," said Sam, "I'd rather be 'clined to 'magine that Lizy'd take de dirt road, bein' it's the least travelled."

Andy wasn't certain; he'd only "hearn tell" about that road, but never been over it. In short, he was strictly non-committal.

Haley, accustomed to strike the balance of probabilities between lies of greater or lesser magnitude, thought that it lay in favour of the dirt road aforesaid. The mention of the thing he thought he perceived was involuntary on Sam's part at first, and his confused attempts to dissuade him he set down to a desperate lying on second thoughts, as being unwilling to implicate Eliza.

When, therefore, Sam indicated the road, Haley plunged briskly into it, followed by Sam and Andy.

After riding about an hour in this way, the whole party made a precipitate and tumultuous descent into a barn-yard belonging to a large farming establishment. Not a soul was in sight, all the hands being employed in the fields; but, as the barn stood conspicuously and plainly square across the road, it was evident that their journey in that direction had reached a decided finale.

"Wan't dat ar what I telled Mas'r?" said Sam, with as air of injured innocence. "How does strange gentleman 'spect to know more about a country dan de natives born and raised?"

"You rascal!" said Haley, "you knew all about this."

"Didn't I tell yer I *knowed*, and yer wouldn't



believe me? I telled Mas'r 'twas all shet up, and fenced up, and I didn't 'spect we could get through—Andy heard me.”

It was all too true to be disputed, and the unlucky man had to pocket his wrath with the best grace he was able, and all three faced to the right about, and took up their line of march for the highway.

In consequence of all the various delays, it was about three-quarters of an hour after Eliza had laid her child to sleep in the village tavern that the party came riding into the same place. Eliza was standing by the window, looking out in another direction, when Sam's quick eye caught a glimpse of her. Haley and Andy were two yards behind. At this crisis Sam contrived to have his hat blown off, and uttered a loud and characteristic ejaculation, which startled her at once; she drew suddenly back; the whole train swept by the window, round to the front door.

A thousand lives seemed to be concentrated in that one moment to Eliza. Her room opened by a side door to the river. She caught her child and sprang down the steps towards it. The trader caught a full glimpse of her just as she was disappearing down the bank; and throwing himself from his horse and calling loudly on Sam and Andy, he was after her like a hound after a deer. In that dizzy moment her feet to her scarce seemed to touch the ground, and a moment brought her to the water's edge. Right on behind they came; and nerved with strength such as God gives only to the desperate, with one wild cry and flying leap, she vaulted sheer over the turbid current by the shore on to the raft of ice beyond. It was a desperate leap—impossible to anything but madness and despair; and Haley, Sam, and Andy instinctively cried out and lifted up their hands as she did it.

The huge green fragment of ice on which she

alighted pitched and creaked as her weight came on it, but she stayed there not a moment. With wild cries and desperate energy she leaped to another and still another cake; stumbling—leaping—slipping—springing upwards again! Her shoes are gone—her stockings cut from her feet—while blood marked every step—but she saw nothing, felt nothing, till dimly, as in a dream, she saw the Ohio side, and a man helping her up the bank.

"Yer a brave gal now, whoever ye are!" said the man, with an oath.

Eliza recognized the voice and face of a man who owned a farm not far from her old home.

"Oh, Mr. Symmes! save me—do save me—do hide me!" said Eliza.

"Why, what's this?" said the man. "Why, if 'tan't Shelby's gal!"

"My child!—this boy!—he'd sold him! There is his mas'r," said she, pointing to the Kentucky shore. "Oh, Mr. Symmes, you've got a little boy!"

"So I have," said the man, as he roughly, but kindly, drew her up the steep bank. "Besides, you're a right brave old gal. I like grit wherever I see it."

When they had gained the top of the bank, the man paused.

"I'd be glad to do something for ye," said he; "but then there's nowhar I could take ye. The best I can do is to tell ye to go *thar*," said he, pointing to a large white house which stood by itself, off the main street of the village. "Go *thar*; they're kind folks. *Thar's* no kind o' danger but they'll help you—they're up to æll that sort o' thing."

"The Lord bless you!" said Eliza earnestly.

"No 'casion, no 'casion in the world," said the man. "what I've done's of no 'count."

"And oh, surely, sir, you won't tell any one!"

"Go to thunder, gal! What do you take a feller for? In course not," said the man. "Come now, go along like a likely, sensible gal, as you are. You've arnt your liberty, and you shall have it, for all me."

Haley had stood a perfectly amazed spectator of the scene, till Eliza had disappeared up the bank, when he turned a blank, inquiring look on Sam and Andy.

"That ar was a tōl'able fair stroke of business," said Sam.

"The gal's got seven devils in her, I believe!" said Haley. "How like a wild-cat she jumped!"

"Wal, now," said Sam, scratching his head, "I hope Mas'r 'll 'scuse us tryin' dat ar road. Don't think I feel spry enough for that ar, no way!" and Sam gave a hoarse chuckle.

"*You* laugh!" said the trader, with a growl.

"Lord bless you, Mas'r, I couldn't help it, now," said Sam, giving way to the long pent-up delight of his soul. "She looked so curis, a leapin' and springin'—ice a crackin'—and only to hear her—plump! ker chunk! ker splash! Spring! Lord! how she goes it!" and Sam and Andy laughed till the tears rolled down their cheeks.

"I'll make ye laugh t'other side yer mouths!" said the trader, laying about their heads with his riding-whip.

Both ducked, and ran shouting up the bank, and were on their horses before he was up.

"Good-evening, Mas'r!" said Sam with much gravity. "I berry much 'spect Missis be anxious 'bout Jerry. Mas'r Haley won't want us no longer. Missis wouldn't hear of our ridin' the critturs over Lizy's bridge to-night;" and, with a facetious poke into Andy's ribs, he started off, followed by the latter at full speed—their shouts of laughter coming faintly on the wind.

## COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, from which this adventure is taken, was written with a serious purpose. What was it, and how is it illustrated by this particular episode?
2. Where do you get the explanation of Eliza's running away?
3. Why would she be free after crossing the river?
4. Trace the events which assisted her to escape.
5. Suggest why the ruffianly Haley was allowed to buy Uncle Tom and the boy.
6. Why does this story end in a laugh?
7. Which character appeals to you most, and why?
8. If you were an artist, which scenes in the above narrative would you like to illustrate?

## 15. TOLD BY THE CURE

(CHARLES READE)

[Gerard and his comrade Denys had recently had a narrow escape from a treacherous inn-keeper at Domfront, who with his fellow robbers tried to kill them for their money. They were saved by a girl at the inn, and by a clever trick on the part of Gerard, and the criminals were caught and hanged.]

AFTER the funeral rites Gerard stepped respectfully up to the Curé, and offered to buy a mass for their souls. Now, the good Curé loved a bit of gossip, and finding his customer was one of those who had fought the thieves at Domfront, would have him into his parlour and hear the whole from his own lips. And his heart warmed to Gerard, and he said, "God was good to thee! I thank Him for't with all my soul. Thou art a good lad. I'll broach a bottle of my old Medoc for thee; and few be the guests I would do that for."

The Curé went to his cupboard, and while he groped for the choice bottle, he muttered to himself, "At their old tricks again !"

"*Plait-il ?*" said Gerard.

"I said naught. Ay, here 'tis."

"Nay, your reverence. You surely spoke. You said, 'At their old tricks again !' "

"Said I so in sooth ?" and his reverence smiled. He then proceeded to broach the wine, and filled a cup for each. Then, he put a log of wood on the fire, for stoves were none in Burgundy. "And so I said 'At their old tricks !' did I ? Come, sip the good wine, and, while it lasts, story for story, I care not if I tell you a little tale."

Gerard's eyes sparkled.

"Thou lovest a story ?"

"As my life."

"Nay, but raise not thine expectations too high, neither. 'Tis but a foolish trifle compared with thine adventures.

"Once upon a time, then, in the kingdom of France, and in the duchy of Burgundy, and not a day's journey from the town where now we sit a-sipping of old Medoc, there lived—a Curé, I say he lived ; but barely. The parish was small, the parishioners greedy ; they never gave their Curé a doit more than he could compel. The nearer they brought him to a disembodied spirit by meagre diet, the holier should be his prayers in their behalf. I know not if this was their creed, but their practice gave it colour. At last he pickled a rod for them.

"One day the richest farmer in the place had twins to baptize. The Curé was had to the christening dinner as usual ; but ere he would baptize the children he demanded, not the christening fees only, but the burial fees. 'Saints defend us, parson,' cried the mother ; 'talk not of burying ! I did never see children liker to live.' 'Nor I,' said the Curé, 'the

praise be to God. Natheless, they are sure to die, being sons of Adam, as well as of thee, dame. But die when they will, 'twill cost them nothing, the burial fees being paid and entered in this book."

"For all that, 'twill cost them something," quoth the miller, the greatest wag in the place, and as big a knave as any; for which was the biggest God knoweth, but no mortal man, not even the hangman. 'Miller, I tell thee nay,' quo' the Curé. 'Parson, I tell you ay,' quo' the miller. "'Twill cost them their lives.' At which millstone conceit was a great laugh; and in the general mirth the fees were paid and the Christians made.

"But when the next parishioner's child, and the next after, and all, had to pay each his burial fee, or lose his place in heaven, discontent did secretly rankle in the parish. Well, one fine day they met in secret, and sent a churchwarden with a complaint to the bishop, and a thunderbolt fell on the poor Curé. Came to him at dinner-time a summons to the episcopal palace, to bring the parish books and answer certain charges. Then the Curé guessed where the shoe pinched. He left his food on the board—for small his appetite now—and took the parish books and went quaking.

"The bishop entertained him with a frown, and exposed the plaint. 'Monseigneur,' said the Curé right humbly, 'doth the parish allege many things against me, or this one only?' 'In sooth, but this one,' said the bishop, and softened a little. 'First, monseigneur, I acknowledge the fact.' 'Tis well,' quoth the bishop; 'that saves time and trouble. Now to your excuse, if excuse there be.'

"Monseigneur, I have been Curé of that parish seven years, and fifty children have I baptized, and buried not five. At first I used to say, "Heaven be

*Natheless*, "Na-the-less," or, in modern English, "nevertheless."



praised, the air of this village is main healthy." But on searching the register book I found 'twas always so, and on probing the matter, it came out that of those born at Domfront, all, but here and there one, did go and get hanged at Aix. But this was to defraud not their Curé only, but the entire Church of her dues, since *pendards* pay no funeral fees, being buried in air. Thereupon, knowing by sad experience their greed, and how they grudge the Church every sou, I laid a trap to keep them from hanging; for, greed against greed, there be of them that will die in their beds like true men ere the Church shall gain those funeral fees for naught.'

"Then the bishop laughed till the tears ran down, and questioned the churchwarden, and he was fain to confess that too many of the parish did come to that unlucky end at Aix. 'Then,' said the bishop, 'I do approve the act, for myself and my successors; and so be it ever, till they mend their manners and die in their beds.' And the next day came the ring-leaders crestfallen to the Curé, and said, 'Parson, ye were ever good to us, barring this untoward matter. Prithee let there be no ill blood anent so trivial a thing.' And the Curé said, 'My children, I were unworthy to be your pastor could I not forgive a wrong; go in peace.'

"And the bishop often told the story, and it kept his memory of the Curé alive, and at last he shifted him to a decent parish, where he can offer a glass of old Medoc to such as are worthy of it. Their name it is not legion."

A light broke in upon Gerard, and his countenance showed it.

"Ay!" said his host, "I am that Curé; so now thou canst guess why I said 'At their old tricks!' My life on't they have wheedled my successor into remitting those funeral fees. You are well out of that parish. And so am I."

The Curé's little niece burst in, "Uncle, the weighing—la ! a stranger !" And she burst out.

The Curé rose directly, but would not part with Gerard. "Wet thy beard once more, and come with me."

In the church porch they found the sexton with a huge pair of scales, and weights of all sizes. Several humble persons were standing by, and soon a woman stepped forward with a sickly child and said, "Be it heavy, be it light, I vow, in-rye meal of the best, whate'er this child shall weigh, and the same will duly pay to Holy Church, an he shall cast his trouble. Pray, good people, for this child, and for me his mother hither come in dole and care !"

The child was weighed, and yelled as if the scale had been the font.

"Courge ! dame," cried Gerard. "This is a good sign. There is plenty of life here to battle its trouble."

"Now, blest be the tongue that tells me so," said the poor woman. She hushed her ponderling against her bosom and stood aloof watching, whilst another woman brought her child to scale.

But presently a loud, dictatorial voice was heard, "Way there, make way for the seigneur !"

The small folk parted on both sides like waves ploughed by a lordly galley, and in marched, in gorgeous attire, his cap adorned by a feather with a topaz at its root, his jerkin richly furred, satin doublet, red hose, shoes like skates, diamond-hilted sword in velvet scabbard, and hawk on his wrist, the lord of the manor. He flung himself into the scales as if he was lord of the zodiac as well as the manor ; whereat the hawk balanced and flapped, but stuck, then winked.

While the sexton heaved in the great weights, the Curé told Gerard, "My lord hath been sick unto death and vows his weight in bread and cheese to the poor, the Church taking her tenth."

"Permit me, my lord; if your lordship continues to press your lordship's staff on the other scale, you will disturb the balance."

His lordship grinned and removed his staff, and leaned on it. The Curé politely but firmly objected to that too.

"*Mille diables!* what am I to do with it, then?" cried the other.

"Deign to hold it out so, my lord, wide of both scales."

When my lord did this, and so fell into the trap he had laid for Holy Church, the good Curé whispered to Gerard, "*Cretensis incidit in Cretensem!*" which I take to mean, "Diamond cut diamond!" He then said with an obsequious air, "If that your lordship grudges Heaven full weight, you might set the hawk on your lacquey, and so save a pound."

"Gramercy for thy rede, Curé," cried the great man reproachfully. "Shall I for one sorry pound grudge my poor fowl the benefit of Holy Church? I'd as lief the devil should have me and all my house as her, any day i' the year."

"Sweet is affection," whispered the Curé.

"Between a bird and a brute," whispered Gerard.

"Tush!" and the Curé looked terrified.

The seigneur's weight was booked, and Heaven, I trust and believe, did not weigh his gratitude in the balance of the sanctuary.

For my unlearned reader is not to suppose there was anything the least eccentric in the man, or his gratitude to the Giver of health and all good gifts.

Four hundred years ago man repented with scourges, prayed by bead, bribed the saints with wax tapers, put fish into the body to sanctify the soul, so-journed in cold water for empire over the emotions.

and thanked God for returning health in 1 cwt. 2 stone 7 lb. 3 oz. 1 dwt. of bread and cheese.

Whilst I have been preaching, who preach so rarely and so ill, the good Curé has been soliciting the lord of the manor to step into the church, and give order what shall be done with his great-great-grandfather.

"Ods bodikins! What! have you dug him up?"

"Nay, my lord, he never was buried."

"What, the old dict was true after all?"

"So true that the workmen this very day found a skeleton erect in the pillar they are repairing. I had sent to my lord at once, but I knew he would be here."

"It is he! 'Tis he!" said his descendant, quickening his pace. "Let us go see the old boy. This youth is a stranger, I think."

Gerard bowed.

"Know then that my great-great-grandfather held his head high, and, being on the point of death, revolted against lying under the aisle with his forbears, for mean folk to pass over. So, as the tradition goes, he swore his son—my great-grandfather—to bury him erect in one of the pillars of the church." Here they entered the porch. "'For,' quoth he, 'no base man shall pass over my stomach.' *Peste!*" And even while speaking, his lordship parried adroitly with his stick a skull that came hopping at him, bowled by a boy in the middle of the aisle, who took to his heels yelling with fear the moment he saw what he had done. His lordship hurled the skull furiously after him as he ran, at which the Curé gave a shout of dismay and put forth his arm to hinder him, but was too late.

The Curé groaned aloud. And as if this had evoked spirits of mischief, up started a whole pack of children from some ambuscade, and unseen, but

heard loud enough, clattered out of the church like a covey rising in a thick wood.

"Oh! these pernicious brats," cried the Curé. "The workmen cannot go to their nonemete but the church is rife with them. Pray Heaven they have not found his late lordship. Nay, I mind, I hid his lordship under a workman's jerkin, and—saints defend us! the jerkin has been moved."

The poor Curé's worst misgivings were realized: the rising generation of the plebeians had played the mischief with the haughty old noble. "The little ones had jockeyed for the bones oh," and pocketed such of them as seemed adapted for certain primitive games then in vogue amongst them.

"I'll excommunicate them," roared the Curé, "and all their race."

"Never heed," said the scapegrace lord, and stroked his hawk. "There is enough of him to swear by. Put him back! put him back!"

"Surely, my lord, 'tis your will his bones be laid in hallowed earth, and masses said for his poor prideful soul?"

The noble stroked his hawk. "Are ye there, Master Curé?" said he. "Nay, the business is too odd: he is out of purgatory by this time—up or down. I shall not draw my purse-strings for him. Every dog his day. *Adieu, Messires! adieu, ancestor!*" And he sauntered off whistling to his hawk and caring it.

His reverence looked ruefully after him. "*Cretensis incidit in Cretensem*," said he sorrowfully. "I thought I had him safe for a dozen masses. Yet I blame him not, but that young ne'er-do-weel which did trundle his ancestor's skull at us: for who could venerate his great-great-grandsire and play football

*Nonemete*, Noon-meat—i.e. dinner.

*Jockeyed*, Played tricks. The quotation is from a comic song written in 1835.

with his head? Well it behoves us to be better Christians than he is."

So they gathered the bones reverently, and the Curé locked them up, and forbade the workmen, who now entered the church, to close up the pillar, till he should recover by threats of the Church's wrath every atom of my lord. And he showed Gerard a famous shrine in the church. Before it were the usual gifts of tapers, etc. There was also a wax image of a falcon, most curiously moulded and coloured to the life, eyes and all. Gerard's eye fell at once on this, and he expressed the liveliest admiration. The Curé assented. Then Gerard asked, "Can the saint have loved hawking?"

The Curé laughed at his simplicity. "Nay, 'tis but a statuary hawk. When they have a bird of gentle breed they cannot train, they make his image, and send it to this shrine with a present, and pray the saint to work upon the stubborn mind of the original, and make it ductile as wax. That is the notion, and methinks a reasonable one, too."

Gerard assented. "But alack, reverend sir, were I a saint, methinks I should side with the innocent dove, rather than with the cruel hawk that rends her."

"By St. Denys! you are right," said the Curé. "But, *que voulez-vous?* the saints are *de bonair*, and have been flesh themselves, and know man's frailty and absurdity. 'Tis the Bishop of Avignon sent this one."

"What! do bishops hawk in this country?"

"One and all. Every noble person hawks, and lives with hawk on wrist. Why, my lord abbot hard by and his lordship that has just parted from us had a two years' feud as to where they should put their hawks down on that very altar there. Each claimed the right hand of the altar for his bird."

"What desecration!"

"Nay! nay! thou knowest we make them doff



both glove and hawk to take the blessed eucharist. Their jewelled gloves will they give to a servant or simple Christian to hold; but their beloved hawks they will put down on no place less than the altar."

Gerard inquired how the battle of the hawks ended.

"Why, the abbot he yielded, as the Church yields to laymen. He searched ancient books, and found that the left hand was the more honourable, being in truth the right hand, since the altar is east, but looks westward. So he gave my lord the *soi-disant* right hand, and contented himself with the real right hand. And even so may the Church still outwit the lay nobles and their arrogance, saving your presence."

"Nay, sir, I honour the Church. I am convent bred, and owe all I have and am to Holy Church."

"Ah, that accounts for my sudden liking to thee. Art a gracious youth. Come and see me whenever thou wilt."

#### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. What examples of *wit* are to be found in this story?
2. Why are some of the words the author uses *old-fashioned*? Give examples.
3. Make a list of the different stories that could be extracted from this chapter and told separately.
4. Which would you call the most humorous situation here?
5. Which of the characters mentioned is described most fully?
6. What do you get to know about Gerard, the hero of *The Cloister and the Hearth*?
7. Is this a story or just a collection of "odds and ends"? Can you find any continuous thread running through it?
8. What new word is coined by the author, and what does it mean?
9. What is there specially interesting about the character of the Cure? Compare him with any other "Churchman" in this book.

## 16. A CHARIOT RACE AT ANTIOCH

(LEW WALLACE)

THE Circus at Antioch stood on the south bank of the river, nearly opposite the island, differing in no respect from the plan of such buildings in general.

In the purest sense, the games were a gift to the public; consequently, everybody was free to attend; and, vast as the holding capacity of the structure was, so fearful were the people on this occasion, lest there should not be room for them, that, early the day before the opening of the exhibition, they took up all the vacant spaces in the vicinity, where their temporary shelter suggested an army in waiting.

At midnight the entrances were thrown wide, and the rabble, surging in, occupied the quarters assigned to them, from which nothing less than an earthquake or any arm with spears could have dislodged them. They dozed the night away on the benches, and breakfasted there; and there the close of the exercises found them, patient and sight-hungry as in the beginning.

The better people, their seats secured, began moving towards the Circus about the first hour of the morning, the noble and very rich among them distinguished by litters and retinues of liveried servants.

By the second hour the efflux from the city was a stream unbroken and innumerable.

Exactly as the gnomon of the official dial up in the citadel pointed the second hour half gone, the legion, in full panoply and with all its standards on exhibit, descended from Mount Sulpius; and when the rear of the last cohort disappeared in the bridge, Antioch was literally abandoned—not that the circus could hold the multitude, but that the multitude was gone out to it, nevertheless.

A great concourse on the river shore witnessed the consul come over from the island in a barge of state. As the great man landed, and was received by the legion, the martial show for one brief moment transcended the attraction of the Circus.

At the third hour the audience, if such it may be termed, was assembled; at last, a flourish of trumpets called for silence, and instantly the gaze of over a hundred thousand persons was directed towards a pile forming the eastern section of the building.

There was a basement first, broken in the middle by a broad arched passage, called the *Porta Pompæ*, over which, on an elevated tribunal magnificently decorated with insignia and legionary standards, the consul sat in the place of honour.

Out of the *Porta Pompæ* over in the east rises a sound mixed of voices and instruments harmonized. Presently, forth issues the chorus of the procession with which the celebration begins; the editor and civic authorities of the city, givers of the games, follow in robes and garlands; then the gods, some on platforms borne by men, others in great four-wheel carriages gorgeously decorated; next them again the contestants of the day, each in costume exactly as he will run, wrestle, leap, box, or drive.

Slowly crossing the arena, the procession proceeds to make circuit of the course. The display is beautiful and imposing. Approval runs before it in a shout, as the water rises and swells in front of a boat in motion. If the dumb, figured gods make no sign of appreciation of the welcome, the editor and his associates are not so backward.

The reception of the athletes is even more demonstrative, for there is not a man in the assemblage who has not something in wager upon them, though but a mite or farthing. And it is noticeable, as the classes move by, that the favourites among them are speedily singled out: either their names are loudest in the

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uproar, or they are more profusely showered with wreaths and garlands tossed to them from the balcony.

If there is a question as to the popularity with the public of the several games, it is now put to rest. To the splendour of the chariots and the super-excellent beauty of the horses, the charioteers add the personality necessary to perfect the charm of their display. Their tunics, short, sleeveless, and of the finest woollen texture, are of the assigned colours. A horseman accompanies each one of them except Ben-Hur, who, for some reason—possibly distrust—has chosen to go alone; so, too, they are all helmeted but him. As they approach, the spectators stand upon the benches, and there is a sensible deepening of the clamour, in which a sharp listener may detect the shrill piping of women and children; at the same time, the things roseate flying from the balcony thicken into a storm, and, striking the men, drop into the chariot-beds, which are threatened with filling to the tops. Even the horses have a share in the ovation; nor may it be said they are less conscious than their masters of the honours they receive.

About three o'clock, speaking in modern style, the programme was concluded except the chariot-race. The editor, wisely considerate of the comfort of the people, chose that time for a recess. At once the *vomitoria* were thrown open, and all who could hastened to the portico outside where the restaurateurs had their quarters. Those who remained yawned, talked, gossiped, consulted their tablets, and, all distinctions else forgotten, merged into but two classes—the winners, who were happy, and the losers, who were glum and captious.

Now, however, a third class of spectators, composed of citizens who desired only to witness the chariot-race, availed themselves of the recess to come in and take their reserved seats; by so doing they thought to

attract the least attention and give the least offence. Among these were Simonides and his party, whose places were in the vicinity of the main entrance on the north side, opposite the consul.

As the four stout servants carried the merchant in his chair up the aisle, curiosity was much excited. Presently some one called his name. Those about caught it and passed it on along the benches to the west ; and there was hurried climbing on seats to get sight of the man about whom common report had coined and put in circulation a romance so mixed of good fortune and bad that the like had never been known or heard of before.

Ilderim was also recognized and warmly greeted ; but nobody knew Balthasar or the two women who followed him closely veiled.

The people made way for the party respectfully, and the ushers seated them in easy speaking distance of each other down by the balustrade overlooking the arena. In providence of comfort they sat upon cushions and had stools for foot-rests.

The women were Iras and Esther.

Upon being seated, the latter cast a frightened look over the Circus, and drew the veil closer about her face ; while the Egyptian, letting her veil fall upon her shoulders, gave herself to view, and gazed at the scene with the seeming unconsciousness of being stared at, which, in a woman, is usually the result of long social habitude.

At length the recess came to an end.

The trumpeters blew a call at which the absentees rushed back to their places. At the same time some attendants appeared in the arena, and, climbing upon the division wall, went to an entablature near the second goal at the west end, and placed upon it seven wooden balls ; then returning to the first goal, upon an entablature there they set up seven other pieces of wood hewn to represent dolphins.

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"What shall they do with the balls and fishes, O sheik?" asked Balthasar.

"Hast thou never attended a race?"

"Never before; and hardly know I why I am here."

"Well, they are to keep the count. At the end of each round run thou shalt see one ball and one fish taken down."

The preparations were now complete, and presently a trumpeter in gaudy uniform arose by the editor, ready to blow the signal of commencement promptly at his order. Straightway the stir of the people and the hum of their conversation died away. Every face near-by, and every face in the lessening perspective, turned to the east, as all eyes settled upon the gates of the six stalls which shut in the competitors.

The trumpet sounded short and sharp; whereupon the starters, one for each chariot, leaped down from behind the pillars of the goal, ready to give assistance if any of the fours proved unmanageable.

Again the trumpet blew, and simultaneously the gate-keepers threw the stalls open.

First appeared the mounted attendants of the charioteers, five in all, Ben-Hur having rejected the service. The chalked line was lowered to let them pass, then raised again. They were beautifully mounted, yet scarcely observed as they rode forward; for all the time trampling of eager horses, and the voices of drivers scarcely less eager, were heard behind in the stalls, so that one might not look away an instant from the gaping doors.

The chalked line up again, the gate-keepers called their men, instantly the ushers on the balcony waved their hands, and shouted with all their strength, "Down! down!"

As well have whistled to stay a storm.

Forth from each stall, like missiles in a volley from so many great guns, rushed the six fours; and up the vast assemblage arose, electrified and irrepressible,



and, leaping upon the benches, filled the Circus and the air above it with yells and screams. This was the time for which they had so patiently waited!—this the moment of supreme interest treasured up in talk and dreams since the proclamation of the games!

"He is come—there—look!" cried Iras, pointing to Messala.

"I see him," answered Esther, looking at Ben-Hur.

The veil was withdrawn. For an instant the little Jewess was brave. An idea of the joy there is in doing an heroic deed under the eyes of a multitude came to her, and she understood ever after how, at such times, the souls of men, in the frenzy of performance, laugh at death or forget it utterly.

The competitors were now under view from nearly every part of the Circus, yet the race was not begun; they had first to make the chalked line successfully.

The line was stretched for the purpose of equalizing the start. If it were dashed upon, discomfiture of man and horses might be apprehended; on the other hand, to approach it timidly was to incur the hazard of being thrown behind in the beginning of the race; and that was certain forfeit of the great advantage always striven for—the position next the division wall on the inner line of the course.

The competitors having started, each on the shortest line for the position next the wall, yielding would be like giving up the race; and who dared yield? It is not in common nature to change a purpose in mid-career; and the cries of encouragement from the balcony were indistinguishable and indescribable; a roar which had the same effect upon all the drivers.

The fours neared the rope together. Then the trumpeter by the editor's side blew a signal vigorously. Twenty feet away it was not heard. Seeing the action, however, the judges dropped the rope, and not an instant too soon, for the hoof of one of Messala's horses struck it as it fell. Nothing daunted, the Roman shook

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out his long lash, loosed the reins, leaned forward, and, with a triumphant shout, took the wall.

"Jove with us ! Jove with us !" yelled all the Roman faction, in a frenzy of delight.

As Messala turned in, the bronze lion's head at the end of his axle caught the fore-leg of the Athenian's right-hand trace-mate, flinging the brute over against its yoke-fellow. Both staggered, struggled, and lost their headway. The ushers had their will at least in part. The thousands held their breath with horror ; only up where the consul sat was there shouting.

"Jove with us !" screamed Drusus frantically.

"He wins ! Jove with us !" answered his associates, seeing Messala speed on.

Tablet in hand, Sanballat turned to them ; a crash from the course below stopped his speech, and he could not but look that way.

Messala having passed, the Corinthian was the only contestant on the Athenian's right, and to that side the latter tried to turn his broken four ; and then, as ill-fortune would have it, the wheel of the Byzantine, who was next on the left, struck the tail-piece of his chariot, knocking his feet from under him. There was a crash, a scream of rage and fear, and the unfortunate Cleanthes fell under the hoofs of his own steeds ; a terrible sight, against which Esther covered her eyes.

On swept the Corinthian, on the Byzantine, on the Sidonian.

Sanballat looked for Ben-Hur, and turned again to Drusus and his coterie.

"A hundred sestertii on the Jew !" he cried.

"Taken !" answered Drusus.

"Another hundred on the Jew !" shouted Sanballat.

Nobody appeared to hear him. He called again ; the situation below was too absorbing, and they were too busy shouting, "Messala ! Messala ! Jove with us !"

When the Jewess ventured to look again, a party of workmen were removing the horses and broken car; another party were taking off the man himself; and every bench upon which there was a Greek was vocal with execrations and prayers for vengeance. Suddenly she dropped her hands; Ben-Hur, unhurt, was to the front, coursing freely forward along with the Roman! Behind them, in a group, followed the Sidonian, the Corinthian, and the Byzantine.

The race was on; the souls of the racers were in it; over them bent the myriads.

When the dash for position began, Ben-Hur, as we have seen, was on the extreme left of the six. For a moment, like the others, he was half blinded by the light in the arena; yet he managed to catch sight of his antagonists and divine their purpose. At Messala, who was more than an antagonist to him, he gave one searching look. The air of passionless hauteur characteristic of the fine patrician face was there as of old, and so was the Italian beauty, which the helmet rather increased; but more—it may have been a jealous fancy, or the effect of the brassy shadow in which the features were at the moment cast, still the Israelite thought he saw the soul of the man as through a glass darkly: cruel, cunning, desperate; not so excited as determined—a soul in a tension of watchfulness and fierce resolve.

In a time not longer than was required to turn to his four again, Ben-Hur felt his own resolution harden to a like temper. At whatever cost, at all hazards, he would humble this enemy! Prize, friends, wagers, honour—everything that can be thought of as a possible interest in the race was lost in the one deliberate purpose. Regard for life even should not hold him back. Yet there was no passion on his part; no blinding rush of heated blood from heart to brain, and back again; no impulse to fling himself upon Fortune—he did not believe in Fortune; far otherwise. He

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had his plan, and, confiding in himself, he settled to the task never more observant, never more capable. The air about him seemed aglow with a renewed and perfect transparency.

When not half-way across the arena, he saw that Messala's rush would, if there was no collision, and the rope fell, give him the wall; that the rope would fall, he ceased as soon to doubt; and, further, it came to him, a sudden flash-like insight, that Messala knew it was to be let drop at the last moment (prearrangement with the editor could safely reach that point in the contest); and it suggested, what more Roman-like than for the official to lend himself to a countryman who, besides being so popular, had also so much at stake? There could be no other accounting for the confidence with which Messala pushed his four forward the instant his competitors were prudentially checking their fours in front of the obstruction—no other except madness.

It is one thing to see a necessity and another to act upon it. Ben-Hur yielded the wall for the time.

The rope fell, and all the fours but his sprang into the course under urgency of voice and lash. He drew head to the right, and, with all the speed of his Arabs, darted across the trails of his opponents, the angle of movement being such as to lose the least time and gain the greatest possible advance. So, while the spectators were shivering at the Athenian's mishap, and the Sidonian, Byzantine, and Corinthian were striving, with such skill as they possessed, to avoid involvement in the ruin, Ben-Hur swept around and took the course neck and neck with Messala, though on the outside. The marvellous skill shown in making the change thus from the extreme left across to the right without appreciable loss did not fail the sharp eyes upon the benches; the Circus seemed to rock and rock again with prolonged applause. Then Esther clasped her hands in glad surprise; then Sanballat, smiling, offered

his hundred sestertii a second time without a taker ; and then the Romans began to doubt, thinking Messala might have found an equal, if not a master, and that in an Israelite !

As an involuntary admission of interest on the part of the spectators, a hush fell over all the Circus, so that for the first time in the race the rattle and clang of the cars plunging after the tugging steeds were distinctly heard. Then, it would seem, Messala observed Ben-Hur, and recognized him ; and at once the audacity of the man flamed out in an astonishing manner.

"Down Eros, up Mars !" he shouted, whirling his lash with practised hand—"Down Eros, up Mars !" he repeated, and caught the well-doing Arabs of Ben-Hur a cut the like of which they had never known.

The blow was seen in every quarter, and the amazement was universal. The silence deepened ; up on the benches behind the consul the boldest held his breath, waiting for the outcome. Only a moment thus : then, involuntarily, down from the balcony, as thunder falls, burst the indignant cry of the people.

The four sprang forward affrighted. No hand had ever been laid upon them except in love ; they had been nurtured ever so tenderly ; and as they grew, their confidence in man became a lesson to men beautiful to see. What should such dainty natures do under such indignity but leap as from death ?

Forward they sprang as with one impulse, and forward leaped the car. Past question, every experience is serviceable to us. Where got Ben-Hur the large hand and mighty grip which helped him now so well ? Where but from the oar with which so long he fought the sea ? And what was this spring of the floor under his feet to the dizzy eccentric lurch with which in the old time the trembling ship yielded to the beat of staggering billows, drunk with their power ? So he kept his place, and gave the four free rein, and called to them in soothing voice, trying merely to guide them

round the dangerous turn ; and before the fever of the people began to abate he had back the mastery. Nor that only ; on approaching the first goal, he was again side by side with Messala, bearing with him the sympathy and admiration of every one not a Roman. So clearly was the feeling shown, so vigorous its manifestation, that Messala, with all his boldness, felt it unsafe to trifle further.

As the cars whirled round the goal, Esther caught sight of Ben-Hur's face—a little pale, a little higher raised, otherwise calm, even placid.

Immediately a man climbed on the entablature at the west end of the division wall, and took down one of the conical wooden balls. A dolphin on the east entablature was taken down at the same time.

In like manner the second ball and second dolphin disappeared.

And then the third ball and third dolphin.

Three rounds concluded : still Messala held the inside position ; still Ben-Hur moved with him side by side ; still the other competitors followed as before. The contest began to have the appearance of one of the double races which became so popular in Rome during the later Cæsarean period—Messala and Ben-Hur in the first, the Corinthian, Sidonian, and Byzantine in the second. Meantime the ushers succeeded in returning the multitude to their seats, though the clamour continued to run the rounds, keeping, as it were, even pace with the rivals in the course below.

In the fifth round the Sidonian succeeded in getting a place outside Ben-Hur, but lost it directly.

The sixth round was entered upon without change of relative position.

Gradually the speed had been quickened—gradually the blood of the competitors warmed with the work. Men and beasts seemed to know alike that the final crisis was near, bringing the time for the winner to assert himself.



The interest which from the beginning had centred chiefly in the struggle between the Roman and the Jew, with an intense and general sympathy for the latter, was fast changing to anxiety on his account. On all the benches the spectators bent forward motionless, except as their faces turned following the contestants. Ilderim quitted combing his beard, and Esther forgot her fears.

"A hundred sestertii on the Jew !" cried Sanballat to the Romans under the consul's awning.

There was no reply.

"A talent—or five talents, or ten ; choose ye !"

He shook his tablets at them defiantly.

"I will take thy sestertii," answered a Roman youth, preparing to write.

"Do not so," interposed a friend.

"Why ?"

"Messala hath reached his utmost speed. See him lean over his chariot-rim, the reins loose as flying ribbons. Look then at the Jew."

The first one looked.

"By Hercules !" he replied, his countenance falling. "The dog throws all his weight on the bits. I see, I see ! If the gods help not our friend, he will be run away with by the Israelite. No, not yet. Look ! Jove with us, Jove with us !"

The cry, swelled by every Latin tongue, shook the *velaria* over the consul's head.

If it were true that Messala had attained his utmost speed, the effort was with effect ; slowly but certainly he was beginning to forge ahead. His horses were running with their heads low down ; from the balcony their bodies appeared actually to skim the earth ; their nostrils showed blood-red in expansion ; their eyes seemed straining in their sockets. Certainly the good steeds were doing their best ! How long could they keep the pace ? It was but the commencement of the sixth round. On they dashed. As they neared

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the second goal, Ben-Hur turned in behind the Roman's car.

The joy of the Messala faction reached its bound ; they screamed and howled, and tossed their colours ; and Sanballat filled his tablets with wagers of their tendering.

Malluch, in the lower gallery over the Gate of Triumph, found it hard to keep his cheer. He had cherished the vague hint dropped to him by Ben-Hur of something to happen in the turning of the western pillars. It was the fifth round, yet the something had not come ; and he had said to himself, the sixth will bring it ; but, lo ! Ben-Hur was hardly holding a place at the tail of his enemy's car.

Over in the east end, Simonides' party held their peace. The merchant's head was bent low. Ilderim tugged at his beard, and dropped his brows till there was nothing of his eyes but an occasional sparkle of light. Esther scarcely breathed. Iras alone appeared glad.

Thus to the first goal, and round it. Messala, fearful of losing his place, hugged the stony wall with perilous clasp ; a foot to the left, and he had been dashed to pieces ; yet, when the turn was finished, no man, looking at the wheel-tracks of the two cars, could have said, here went Messala, there the Jew. They left but one trace behind them.

As they whirled by, Esther saw Ben-Hur's face again, and it was whiter than before.

Simonides, shrewder than Esther, said to Ilderim, the moment the rivals turned into the course, "I am no judge, good sheik, if Ben-Hur be not about to execute some design. His face hath that look."

To which Ilderim answered, "Saw you how clean they were and fresh ? By the splendour of God, friend, they have not been running ! But now watch !"

One ball and one dolphin remained on the entabla-

tures; and all the people drew a long breath, for the beginning of the end was at hand.

First, the Sidonian gave the scourge to his four, and, smarting with fear and pain, they dashed desperately forward, promising for a brief time to go to the front. The effort ended in promise. Next, the Byzantine and Corinthian each made the trial with like result, after which they were practically out of the race. Thereupon, with a readiness perfectly explicable, all the factions except the Romans joined hope in Ben-Hur, and openly indulged their feeling.

"Ben-Hur! Ben-Hur!" they shouted, and the blend of voices of the many rolled overwhelmingly against the consular stand.

From the benches above him as he passed, the favour descended in fierce injunctions.

"Speed thee, Jew!"

"Take the wall now!"

"On! loose the Arabs! Give them rein and scourge!"

"Let him not have the turn on thee again. Now or never!"

Over the balustrade they stooped low, stretching their hands imploringly to him.

Either he did not hear or could not do better, for half-way round the course, and he was still following; at the second goal even still no change!

And now, to make the turn, Messala began to draw in his left-hand steeds, an act which necessarily slackened their speed. His spirit was high; more than one altar was richer of his vows; the Roman genius was still president. On the three pillars only six hundred feet away were fame, increase of fortune, promotions, and a triumph ineffably sweetened by hate, all in store for him! That moment Malluch, in the gallery, saw Ben-Hur lean forward over his Arabs and give them the reins. Out flew the many-folded lash in his hand; over the backs of the startled steeds it writhed and

hissed, and hissed and writhed again and again; and though it fell not, there were both sting and menace in its quick report; and as the man passed thus from quiet to resistless action, his face suffused, his eyes gleaming, along the reins he seemed to flash his will; and instantly not one, but the four as one, answered with a leap that landed them alongside the Roman's car. Messala, on the perilous edge of the goal, heard, but dared not look to see what the awakening portended. From the people he received no sign. Above the noises of the race there was but one voice, and that was Ben-Hur's. In the old Aramaic, as the sheik himself, he called to the Arabs:

"On, Atair! On, Rigel! What, Antares! dost thou linger now? Good horse—oho, Aldebaran! I hear them singing in the tents. I hear the children singing and the women—singing of the stars, of Atair, Antares, Rigel, Aldebaran, victory!—and the song will never end. Well done! Home to-morrow, under the black tent—home! On, Antares! The tribe is waiting for us, and the master is waiting! 'Tis done! 'tis done! Ha, ha! We have overthrown the proud. The hand that smote us is in the dust. Ours the glory! Ha, ha!—steady! The work is done—soho! Rest!"

There had never been anything of the kind more simple; seldom anything so instantaneous.

At the moment chosen for the dash, Messala was moving in a circle round the goal. To pass him, Ben-Hur had to cross the track, and good strategy required the movement to be in a forward direction; that is, on a like circle limited to the least possible increase. The thousands on the benches understood it all: they saw the signal given—the magnificent response; the four close outside Messala's outer wheel; Ben-Hur's inner wheel behind the other's car—all this they saw. Then they heard a crash loud enough to send a thrill through the Circus, and, quicker than thought, out over the

course a spray of shining white and yellow flinders flew. Down on its right side toppled the bed of the Roman's chariot. There was a rebound as of the axle hitting the hard earth; another and another; then the car went to pieces; and Messala, entangled in the reins, pitched forward headlong.

To increase the horror of the sight by making death certain, the Sidonian, who had the wall next behind, could not stop or turn out. Into the wreck full speed he drove; then over the Roman, and into the latter's four, all mad with fear. Presently, out of the turmoil, the fighting of horses, the resound of blows, the murky cloud of dust and sand, he crawled, in time to see the Corinthian and Byzantine go on down the course after Ben-Hur, who had not been an instant delayed.

The people arose, and leaped upon the benches, and shouted and screamed. Those who looked that way caught glimpses of Messala, now under the trampling of the fours, now under the abandoned cars. He was still; they thought him dead; but far the greater number followed Ben-Hur in his career. They had not seen the cunning touch of the reins by which, turning a little to the left, he caught Messala's wheel with the iron-shod point of his axle, and crushed it; but they had seen the transformation of the man, and themselves felt the heat and glow of his spirit, the heroic resolution, the maddening energy of action with which, by look, word, and gesture, he so suddenly inspired his Arabs. And such running! It was rather the long leaping of lions in harness; but for the lumbering chariot it seemed the four were flying. When the Byzantine and Corinthian were half-way down the course, Ben-Hur turned the first goal.

*And the race was WON!*

The consul arose; the people shouted themselves hoarse; the editor came down from his seat and crowned the victors.

The fortunate man among the boxers was a low-

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browed, yellow-haired Saxon, of such brutalized face as to attract a second look from Ben-Hur, who recognized a teacher with whom he himself had been a favourite at Rome. From him the young Jew looked up and beheld Simonides and his party on the balcony. They waved their hands to him. Esther kept her seat; but Iras arose, and gave him a smile and a wave of her fan—favours not the less intoxicating to him because we know, O reader, they would have fallen to Messala had he been the victor.

The procession was then formed, and, midst the shouting of the multitude, which had had its will, passed out of the Gate of Triumph.

And the day was over.

### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. *Ben-Hur*, the book in which this scene occurs, has been turned into a film play with great success. Can you account for its popularity?
2. What modern sport approximates most nearly to chariot racing? Explain carefully why you think so.
3. Why was there a Roman circus at Antioch? What different nationalities are mentioned?
4. The reader's sympathies are generally with the Jew. The author intends them to be. How does he succeed in making you want Ben-Hur to win?
5. What are you told of Ben-Hur's past history?
6. Some of the characters mentioned are quite unimportant to this particular episode. Who are they?
7. Why does the author use the *present* tense in one part of his description?
8. Express in one word the theme of this story. When does the climax occur?
9. What points of comparison and contrast do you notice in the two chief characters?
10. How is your interest in the horses awakened in this narrative?



## 17. THE END OF CARVER DOONE

(R. D. BLACKMORE)

EVERYTHING was settled smoothly, and without any fear or fuss, that Lorna might find end of troubles, and myself of eager waiting, with the help of Parson Bowden, and the good wishes of two counties. I could scarce believe my fortune, when I looked upon her beauty, gentleness, and sweetness, mingled with enough of humour, and warm woman's feeling, never to be dull or tiring ; never themselves to be weary.

For she might be called woman now ; although a very young one, and as full of playful ways, or perhaps I may say ten times as full, as if she had known no trouble. To wit, the spirit of bright childhood, having been so curbed and straitened, ere its time was over, now broke forth, enriched and varied with the garb of conscious maidenhood. And the sense of steadfast love, and eager love enfolding her, coloured with so many tinges all her looks, and words, and thoughts, that to me it was the noblest vision even to think about her.

But this was far too bright to last, without bitter break, and the plunging of happiness in horror, and of passionate joy in agony. My darling, in her softest moments, when she was alone with me, when the spark of defiant eyes was veiled beneath dark lashes, and the challenge of gay beauty passed into sweetest invitation ; at such times of her purest love and warmest faith in me, a deep abiding fear would flutter in her bounding heart, as of deadly fate's approach. She would cling to me, and nestle to me, being scared of coyness, and lay one arm around my neck, and ask if I could do without her.

Hence, as all emotions haply, of those who are more

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to us than ourselves, find within us stronger echo, and more perfect answer, so I could not be regardless of some hidden evil ; and my dark misgivings deepened as the time drew nearer. I kept a steadfast watch on Lorna, neglecting a field of beans entirely, as well as a litter of young pigs, and a cow somewhat given to jaundice. And I let Jem Slocombe go to sleep in the tallat, all one afternoon, and Bill Dadds draw off a bucket of cider, without so much as a "by your leave." For these men knew that my knighthood, and my coat of arms, and (most of all) my love, were greatly against good farming ; the sense of our country being—and perhaps it may be sensible—that a man who sticks up to be anything, must allow himself to be cheated.

But I never did stick up, nor would, though all the parish bade me ; and I whistled the same tunes to my horses, and held my plough-tree just the same, as if no King nor Queen had ever come to spoil my tune or hand. For this thing, nearly all the men around our part upbraided me, but the women praised me ; and for the most part these are right, when themselves are not concerned.

However humble I might be, no one, knowing anything of our part of the country, would for a moment doubt that now here was a great to-do, and talk of John Ridd and his wedding. The fierce fight with the Doones so lately, and my leading of the combat (though I fought not more than need be), and the vanishing of Sir Counsellor, and the galloping madness of Carver, and the religious fear of the women that this last was gone to hell—for he himself had declared that his aim, while he cut through our yeomanry ; also their remorse, that he should have been made to go thither, with all his children left behind—these things, I say (if ever I can again contrive to say anything), had led to the broadest excitement about my wedding of Lorna. We heard that people meant to come from more than thirty miles around, upon excuse of seeing

my stature and Lorna's beauty; but in good truth out of sheer curiosity, and the love of meddling.

Our clerk had given notice, that not a man should come inside the door of his church without shilling-fee; and women (as sure to see twice as much) must every one pay two shillings. I thought this wrong; and, as churchwarden, begged that the money might be paid into mine own hands, when taken. But the clerk said that was against all law; and he had orders from the parson to pay it to him without any delay. So as I always obey the parson, when I care not much about a thing, I let them have it their own way; though feeling inclined to believe, sometimes, that I ought to have some of the mony.

Dear mother arranged all the ins and outs of the way in which it was to be done; and Annie, and Lizzie, and all the Snowes, and even Ruth Huckaback (who was there, after great persuasion), made such a sweeping of dresses, that I scarcely knew where to place my feet, and longed for a staff, to put by their gowns. Then Lorna came out of a pew half-way, in a manner which quite astonished me, and took my left hand in her right, and I prayed God that it were done with.

My darling looked so glorious, that I was afraid of glancing at her, yet took in all her beauty. She was in a fright, no doubt; but nobody should see it; whereas I said (to myself at least), "I will go through it like a gravedigger."

Lorna's dress was of pure white, clouded with faint lavender (for the sake of the old Earl Brandir), and as simple as need be, except for perfect loveliness. I was afraid to look at her, as I said before, except when each of us said, "I will;" and then each dwelled upon the other.

It is impossible for any, who have not loved as I have, to conceive my joy and pride, when after ring and all was done, and the parson had blessed us,

Lorna turned to look at me, with her playful glance subdued, and deepened by this solemn act.

Her eyes, which none on earth may ever equal, or compare with, told me such a tale of hope, and faith, and heart's devotion, that I was almost amazed, thoroughly as I knew them. Darling eyes, the clearest eyes, the loveliest, the most loving eyes—the sound of a shot rang through the church, and those eyes were dim with death.

Lorna fell across my knees, when I was going to kiss her, as the bridegroom is allowed to do, and encouraged, if he needs it ; a flood of blood came out upon the yellow wood of the altar steps ; and at my feet lay Lorna, trying to tell me some last message out of her faithful eyes. I lifted her up, and petted her, and coaxed her, but it was no good ; the only sign of life remaining was a drip of bright red blood.

Some men know what things befall them in the supreme time of their life—far above the time of death—but to me comes back as a hazy dream without any knowledge in it, what I did, or felt, or thought, with my wife's arms flagging, flagging, around my neck, as I raised her up, and softly put them there. She sighed a long sign on my breast, for her last farewell to life, and then she grew, so cold, and cold, that I asked the time of year.

It was now Whit-Tuesday, and the lilacs all in blossom ; and why I thought of the time of year, with the young death in my arms, God, or His angels, may decide, having so strangely given us. Enough that so I did, and looked ; and our white lilacs were beautiful. Then I laid my wife in my mother's arms, and begging that no one would make a noise, went forth for my revenge.

Of course, I knew who had done it. There was but one man upon earth, or under it, where the devil dwells, who could have done such a thing—such a thing. I used no harsher word about it, while I

leaped upon our best horse, with bridle but no saddle, and set the head of Kickums towards the course now pointed out to me. Who showed me the course, I cannot tell. I only know that I took it. And the men fell back before me.

Weapon of no sort had I. Unarmed, and wondering at my strange attire (with a bridal vest, wrought by our Annie, and red with the blood of the bride), I went forth just to find out this ; whether in this world there be, or be not, God of justice.

With my vicious horse at a furious speed, I came upon Black Barrow Down, directed by some shout of men, which seemed to me but a whisper. And there, about a furlong before me, rode a man on a great black horse ; and I knew that the man was Carver Doone.

"Thy life, or mine," I said to myself ; "as the will of God may be. But we two live not upon this earth, one more hour, together."

I knew the strength of this great man ; and I knew that he was armed with a gun—if he had time to load again, after shooting my Lorna,—or at any rate with pistols, and a horseman's sword as well. Nevertheless, I had no more doubt of killing the man before me, than a cook has of spitting a headless fowl.

Sometimes seeing no ground beneath me, and sometimes heeding every leaf, and the crossing of the grass blades, I followed over the long moor, reckless whether seen or not. But only once, the other man turned round, and looked back again ; and then I was beside a rock, with a reedy swamp behind me.

Although he was so far before me, and riding as hard as ride he might, I saw that he had something on the horse in front of him ; something which needed care, and stopped him from looking backward. In the whirling of my wits, I fancied first that this was Lorna ; until the scene I had been through fell, across hot brain, and heart, like a drop at the close of a

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tragedy. Rushing there, through crag and quag, at utmost speed of a maddened horse, I saw, as of another's fate, calmly (as on canvas laid), the brutal deed, the piteous anguish, and the cold despair.

The man turned up the gully leading from the moor to Cloven Rocks, through which John Fry had tracked Uncle Ben, as of old related. But as Carver entered it, he turned round and beheld me not a hundred yards behind ; and I saw that he was bearing his child, little Ensie, before him. Ensie also described me, and stretched his hands, and cried to me ; for the face of his father frightened him.

Carver Doone, with a vile oath, thrust spurs into his flagging horse, and laid one hand on a pistol-stock, whence I knew that his slung carbine had received no bullet, since the one that had pierced Lorna. And a cry of triumph rose from the black depths of my heart. What cared I for pistols ? I had no spurs, neither was my horse one to need the rowel ; I rather held him in than urged him, for he was fresh as ever ; and I knew that the black steed in front, if he breasted the steep ascent, where the track divided, must be in our reach at once.

His rider knew this ; and, having no room in the rocky channel to turn and fire, drew rein at the cross-ways sharply, and plunged into the black ravine leading to the Wizard's Slough. "Is it so ?" I said to myself, with brain and head cold as iron : "though the foul fiend come from the slough to save thee, thou shalt carve it, Carver."

I followed my enemy carefully, steadily, even leisurely ; for I had him, as in a pitfall, whence no escape might be. He thought that I feared to approach him, for he knew not where he was : and his low disdainful laugh came back. "Laugh he who wins," thought I.

A gnarled and half-starved oak, as stubborn as my own resolve, and smitten by some storm of old, hung



from the crag above me. Rising from my horse's back, although I had no stirrups, I caught a limb, and tore it (like a wheat-awn) from the socket. Men show the rent even now, with wonder ; none with more wonder than myself.

Carver Doone turned the corner suddenly, on the black and bottomless bog ; with a start of fear he reined back his horse, and I thought he would have rushed upon me. But instead of that he again rode on ; hoping to find a way round the side.

Now there is a way between cliff and slough, for those who know the ground thoroughly, or have time enough to search it ; but for him there was no road, and he lost some time in seeking it. Upon this he made up his mind, and wheeling, fired, and then rode at me.

His bullet struck me somewhere, but I took no heed of that. Fearing only his escape, I laid my horse across the way, and with the limb of the oak struck full on the forehead his charging steed. Ere the slash of the sword came nigh me, man and horse rolled over, and well-nigh bore my own horse down, with the power of their onset.

Carver Doone was somewhat stunned, and could not arise for a moment. Meanwhile I leaped on the ground and waited, smoothing my hair back, and baring my arms, as though in the ring for wrestling. Then the little boy ran to me, clasped my leg, and looked up at me : and the terror in his eyes made me almost fear myself.

"Ensie, dear," I said quite gentle, grieving that he should see his wicked father killed, "run up yonder round the corner, and try to find a bunch of bluebells for the pretty lady." The child obeyed me, hanging back, and looking back, and then laughing, while I prepared for business. There and then, I might have killed mine enemy, with a single blow, while he lay unconscious ; but it would have been foul pay.

With a sullen and black scowl, the Carver gathered his mighty limbs, and arose, and looked round for his weapons ; but I had put them well away. Then he came to me, and gazed, being wont to frighten thus young men.

"I would not harm you, lad," he sad, with a lofty style of sneering : "I have punished you enough, for most of your impertinence. For the rest I forgive you ; because you have been good, and gracious, to my little son. Go, and be contented."

For answer, I smote him on the cheek, lightly, and not to hurt him : but to make his blood leap up. I would not sully my tongue by speaking to a man like this.

There was a level space of sward, between us and the slough. With the courtesy derived from London, and the processions I had seen, to this place I led him. And that he might breathe himself, and have every fibre cool, and every muscle ready, my hold upon his coat I loosed, and left him to begin with me, whenever he thought proper.

I think he felt that his time was come. I think he knew from my knitted muscles, and the firm arch of my breast, and the way in which I stood ; but most of all from my stern blue eyes ; that he had found his master. At any rate, a paleness came, an ashy paleness on his cheeks, and the vast calves of his legs bowed in, as if he were out of training.

Seeing this, villain as he was, I offered him first chance. I stretched forth my left hand, as I do to a weaker antagonist, and I let him have the hug of me. But in this I was too generous ; having forgotten my pistol-wound, and the cracking of one of my short lower ribs. Carver Doone caught me round the waist, with such a grip as never yet had been laid upon me.

I heard my rib go ; I grasped his arm ; then I

took him by the throat, which is not allowed in wrestling; but he had snatched at mine; and now was no time of dalliance. In vain he tugged, and strained, and writhed, dashed his bleeding fist into my face, and flung himself on me, with gnashing jaws. Beneath the iron of my strength—for God that day was with me—I had him helpless in two minutes, and his blazing eyes lolled out.

"I will not harm thee any more," I cried, so far as I could for panting, the work being very furious; "Carver Doone, thou art beaten: own it, and thank God for it; and go thy way, and repent thyself."

It was all too late. Even if he had yielded in his ravening frenzy, for his beard was frothy as a mad dog's jowl; even if he would have owned that, for the first time in his life, he had found his master; it was all too late.

The black bog had him by the feet; the sucking of the ground drew on him, like the thirsty lips of death. In our fury we had heeded neither wet nor dry, nor thought of earth beneath us. I myself might scarcely leap, with the last spring of o'er-laboured legs, from the engulfing grave of slime. He fell back, with his swarthy breast (from which my gripe had rent all clothing), like a hummock of bog-oak, standing out the quagmire; and then he tossed his arms to heaven, and they were black to the elbow, and the glare of his eyes was ghastly. I could only gaze and pant: for my strength was no more than an infant's, from the fury and the horror. Scarcely could I turn away, while, joint by joint, he sank from sight.

#### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. *Lorna Doone* is as thrilling as well as a beautiful book. It deals with a band of robbers who had killed John Ridd's father and made themselves the terror of the countryside. The end of

- Carver, the most terrible of them all, is a final act of vengeance. Is it justified?
2. "This is one of the great fights of literature." What makes it so?
  3. If you have read the book, describe John's home-coming and the happy ending to the story. If not, how do you think a happy ending is possible?
  4. What references are made to the size and strength of the two fighters? Are they given all at once?
  5. Give examples of descriptions of scenery. Are these necessary? How do they add to the effect of the story?
  6. Which incidents mark out John Ridd as a gentleman?
  7. This story is simply told, and is all the better for it. Why?
  8. Which is the most dramatic scene?
  9. How is impending tragedy suggested in the early part of the narrative?

## 18. A COUNTRY CRICKET-MATCH

(MARY RUSSELL MITFORD)

FOR the last three weeks our village has been in a state of great excitement, occasioned by a challenge from our north-western neighbours, the men of B., to contend with us at cricket. Now, we have not been much in the habit of playing matches. Three or four years ago, indeed, we encountered the men of S., our neighbours south-by-east, with a sort of doubtful success, beating them on our own ground, whilst they in the second match returned the compliment on theirs. This discouraged us. Then an unnatural coalition between a high-church curate and an evangelical gentleman-farmer drove our lads from the Sunday evening practice, which, as it did not begin

before both services were concluded, and as it tended to keep the young men from the ale-house, our magistrates had winked at if not encouraged. The sport, therefore, had languished until the present season, when under another change of circumstances the spirit began to revive. Half-a-dozen fine active lads, of influence amongst their comrades, grew into men and yearned for cricket; an enterprising publican gave a set of ribands: his rival, mine host of the Rose, and out-doer by profession, gave two; and the clergyman and his lay ally, both well-disposed and good-natured men, gratified by the submission to their authority, and finding, perhaps, that no great good resulted from the substitution of public-houses for out-of-door diversions, relaxed. In short, the practice recommenced, and the hill was again alive with men and boys, and innocent merriment; but farther than the riband matches amongst ourselves nobody dreamed of going, till this challenge—we were modest, and doubted our own strength. The B. people, on the other hand, must have been braggers born, a whole parish of gasconaders. Never was such boasting! such crowing! such ostentatious display of practice! such mutual compliments from man to man—bowler to batter, batter to bowler! It was a wonder they did not challenge all England. It must be confessed that we were a little astounded; yet we firmly resolved not to decline the combat; and one of the most spirited of the new growth, William Grey by name, took up the glove in a style of manly courtesy, that would have done honour to a knight in the days of chivalry. "We were not professed players," he said, "being little better than schoolboys, and scarcely older; but, since they have done us the honour to challenge us, we would try our strength. It would be no discredit to be beaten by such a field."

Having accepted the wager of battle, our champion began forthwith to collect his forces. William Grey

is himself one of the finest youths that one shall see—tall, active, slender and yet strong, with a piercing eye full of sagacity, and a smile full of good-humour—a farmer's son by station, and used to hard work as farmer's sons are now, liked by everybody, and admitted to be an excellent cricketer. He immediately set forth to muster his men, remembering with great complacency that Samuel Long, a bowler *comme il y en a peu*, the very man who had knocked down nine wickets, had beaten us, bowled us out at the fatal return match some years ago at S., had luckily, in a remove of a quarter of a mile last Lady day, crossed the boundaries of his old parish, and actually belonged to us. Here was a stroke of good fortune! Our captain applied to him instantly; and he agreed at a word. Indeed, Samuel Long is a very civilized person. He is a middle-aged man, who looks rather old amongst our young lads, and whose thickness and breadth gave no token of remarkable activity; but he is very active, and so steady a player! so safe! We had half gained the match when we had secured him. He is a man of substance, too, in every way; owns one cow, two donkeys, six pigs, and geese and ducks beyond count—dresses like a farmer, and owes no man a shilling—and all this from pure industry, sheer day-labour. Note that your good cricketer is commonly the most industrious man in the parish; the habits that make him such are precisely those which make a good workman—steadiness, sobriety, and activity—Samuel Long might pass for the *beau ideal* of the two characters. Happy were we to possess him! Then we had another piece of good luck. James Brown, a journeyman blacksmith and a native, who, being of a rambling disposition, had roamed from place to place for half a dozen years, had just returned to settle with his brother at another corner of our village, bringing with him a prodigious reputation in cricket and in gallantry—the gay



Lothario of the neighbourhood. He is said to have made more conquests in love and in cricket than any blacksmith in the county. To him also went the indefatigable William Grey, and he also consented to play. No end to our good fortune! Another celebrated batter, called Joseph Hearne, had likewise recently married into the parish. He worked, it is true, at the A. mills, but slept at the house of his wife's father in our territories. He also was sought and found by our leader. But he was grand and shy; made an immense favour of the thing; courted courting and then hung back—"Did not know that he could be spared; had partly resolved not to play again—at least not this season; thought it rash to accept the challenge; thought they might do without him——" "Truly I think so, too," said our spirited champion; "we will not trouble you, Mr. Hearne."

Having thus secured two powerful auxiliaries, and rejected a third, we began to reckon and select the regular native forces. Thus ran our list: William Grey, 1.—Samuel Long, 2.—James Brown, 3.—George and John Simmons, one capital, the other so-so—an uncertain hitter, but a good fieldsman, 5.—Joel Brent, excellent, 6.—Ben Appleton—here was a little pause—Ben's abilities at cricket were not completely ascertained; but then he was so good a fellow, so full of fun and waggy! no doing without Ben. So he figured in the list, 7.—George Harris—a short halt there too! Slowish—slow but sure. I think the proverb brought him in, 8.—Tom Coper—oh, beyond the world, Tom Coper! the red-headed gardening lad, whose left-handed strokes send *her* (a cricket-ball, like that other moving thing, a ship, is always of the feminine gender), send her spinning a mile, 9.—Harry Willis, another blacksmith, 10.

We had now ten of our eleven, but the choice of the last occasioned some demur. Three young Martins, rich farmers of the neighbourhood, successively pre-

sented themselves, and were all rejected by our independent and impartial general for want of merit—*cricketal* merit. "Not good enough," was his pithy answer. Then our worthy neighbour, the half-pay lieutenant, offered his services—he, too, though with some hesitation and modesty, was refused—"Not quite young enough" was his sentence. John Strong, the exceeding long son of our dwarfish mason, was the next candidate—a nice youth—everybody likes John Strong—and a willing, but so tall and so limp, bent in the middle—a thread-paper, six feet high! We were all afraid that, in spite of his name, his strength would never hold out. "Wait till next year, John," quoth William Grey, with all the dignified seniority of twenty speaking to eighteen. "Coper's a year younger," said John. "Coper's a foot shorter," replied William: so John retired: and the eleventh man remained unchosen, almost to the eleventh hour. The eve of the match arrived, and the post was still vacant, when a little boy of fifteen, David Willis, brother to Harry, admitted by accident to the last practice, saw eight of them out, and was voted in by acclamation.

That Sunday evening's practice (for Monday was the important day) was a period of great anxiety, and, to say the truth, of great pleasure. There is something strangely delightful in the innocent spirit of party. To be one of a numerous body, to be authorized to say *we*, to have a rightful interest in triumph or defeat, is gratifying at once to social feeling and to personal pride. There was not a ten-year-old urchin, or a septuagenary woman in the parish who did not feel an additional importance, a reflected consequence, in speaking of "our side." An election interests in the same way; but that feeling is less pure. Money is there, and hatred, and politics, and lies. Oh, to be a voter, or a voter's wife, comes nothing near the genuine and hearty sympathy of belonging to a parish, breath-

ing the same air, looking on the same trees, listening to the same nightingales! Talk of a patriotic elector! Give me a parochial patriot, a man who loves his parish! Even we, the female partisans, may partake the common ardour. I am sure I did. I never, though tolerably eager and enthusiastic at all times, remember being in a more delicious state of excitement than on the eve of that battle. Our hopes waxed stronger and stronger. Those of our players who were present were excellent. William Grey got forty notches off his own bat; and that brilliant hitter, Tom Coper, gained eight from two successive balls. As the evening advanced, too, we had encouragement of another sort. A spy, who had been dispatched to reconnoitre the enemy's quarters, returned from their practising ground with a most consolatory report. "Really," said Charles Gröver, our intelligence—a fine old steady judge, one who had played well in his day—"they are no better than so many old women. Any five of ours would beat their eleven." This sent us to bed in high spirits.

Morning dawned less favourably. The sky promised a series of deluging showers, and kept its word as English skies are wont to do on such occasions; and a lamentable message arrived at the headquarters from our trusty comrade Joel Brent. His master, a great farmer, had begun the hay-harvest that very morning, and Joel, being as eminent in one field as in another, could not be spared. Imagine Joel's plight! the most ardent of all our eleven! a knight held back from the tourney! a soldier from the battle! The poor swain was inconsolable. At last, one who is always ready to do a good-natured action, great or little, set forth to back his petition; and, by dint of appealing to the public spirit of our worthy neighbour and the state of the barometer, talking alternately of the parish honour and thunder showers, of lost matches and sopped hay, he carried

his point, and returned triumphantly with the delighted Joel.

In the meantime, we became sensible of another defalcation. On calling over our roll, Brown was missing; and the spy of the preceding night, Charles Grover—the universal scout and messenger of the village, a man who will run half a dozen miles for a pint of beer, who does errands for the very love of the trade, who, if he had been a lord, would have been an ambassador—was instantly dispatched to summon the truant. His report spread general consternation. Brown had set off at four o'clock in the morning to play in a cricket-match at M., a little town twelve miles off, which had been his last residence. Here was desertion! Here was treachery! Here was treachery against that goodly state, our parish! To send James Brown to Coventry was the immediate resolution; but even that seemed too light a punishment for such a delinquency. Then how we cried him down! At ten on Sunday night (for the rascal had actually practised with us, and never said a word of his intended disloyalty) he was our faithful mate, and the best player (take him all in all) of the eleven. At ten in the morning he had run away, and we were well rid of him; he was no batter compared with William Grey or Tom Coper; not fit to wipe the shoes of Samuel Long as a bowler; nothing of a scout to John Simmons; the boy David Willis was worth fifty of him—

“I trust we have within our realm,  
Five hundred good as he,”

was the universal sentiment. So we took tall John Strong, who, with an incurable hankering after the honour of being admitted, had kept constantly with the players, to take the chance of some such accident—we took John for our *pis-aller*. I never saw any one prouder than the good-humoured lad was of this not very flattering piece of preferment.

At last we were all assembled, and marched down to H. common, the appointed ground, which, though in our dominions according to the maps, was the constant practising place of our opponents, and *terra incognita* to us. We found our adversaries on the ground as we expected, for our various delays had hindered us from taking the field so early as we wished ; and, as soon as we had settled all preliminaries, the match began.

But, alas ! I have been so long settling my preliminaries, that I have left myself no room for the detail of our victory, and must squeeze the account of our grand achievements into as little compass as Cowley, when he crammed the names of eleven of his mistresses into the narrow space of four eight-syllable lines. *They* began the warfare—those boastful men of B. And what think you, gentle reader, was the amount of their innings ! These challengers—the famous eleven—how many did they get ? Think ! imagine ! guess !—You cannot ?—Well !—they got twenty-two, or, rather, they got twenty ; for two of theirs were short notches, and would never have been allowed, only that, seeing what they were made of, we and our umpires were not particular.—They should have had twenty more if they had chosen to claim them. Oh, how well we fielded ! and how well we bowled ! our good play had quite as much to do with their miserable failure as their bad. Samuel Long is a slow bowler, George Simmons a fast one, and the change from Long's lobbing to Simmons's fast balls posed them completely. Poor simpletons ! they were always wrong, expecting the slow for the quick, and the quick for the slow. Well, we went in. And what were our innings ? Guess again !—guess ! A hundred and sixty-nine ! in spite of soaking showers, and wretched ground, where the ball would not run a yard, we headed them by a hundred and forty-seven ; and then they gave in, as well they might. William Grey pressed them much to try another innings. "There was so much chance," as he



courteously observed, "in cricket, that advantageous as our position seemed, we might, very possibly, be overtaken. The B. men had better try." But they were beaten sulky, and would not move—to my great disappointment; I wanted to prolong the pleasure of success. What a glorious sensation it is to be for five hours together—winning—winning! always feeling what a whist-player feels when he takes up four honours, seven trumps! Who would think that a little bit of leather, and two pieces of wood, had such a delightful and delighting power!

The only drawback on my enjoyment was the failure of the pretty boy, David Willis, who, injudiciously put in first, and playing for the first time in a match amongst men and strangers, who talked to him, and stared at him, was seized with such a fit of shamefaced shyness, that he could scarcely hold his bat, and was bowled out without a stroke, from actual nervousness. "He will come off that," Tom Coper says—I am afraid he will. I wonder whether Tom had ever any modesty to lose. Our other modest lad, John Strong, did very well; his length told in fielding, and he got good fame. Joel Brent, the rescued mower, got into a scrape, and out of it again; his fortune for the day. He ran out his mate, Samuel Long; who, I do believe, but for the excess of Joel's eagerness, would have stayed in till this time, by which exploit he got into sad disgrace; and then he himself got thirty-seven runs, which redeemed his reputation. William Grey made a hit which actually lost the cricket-ball. We think she lodged in a hedge, a quarter of a mile off, but nobody could find her. And George Simmons had nearly lost his shoe, which he tossed away in a passion, for having been caught out, owing to the ball glancing against it. These, together with a very complete somerset of Ben Appleton, our long-stop, who floundered about in the mud, making faces and attitudes as laughable as Grimaldi, none could tell whether by accident or



design, were the chief incidents of the scene of action. Amongst the spectators nothing remarkable occurred, beyond the general calamity of two or three drenchings, except that a form, placed by the side of a hedge, under a very insufficient shelter, was knocked into the ditch, in a sudden rush of the cricketers to escape a pelting shower, by which means all parties shared the fate of Ben Appleton, some on land and some by water; and that, amidst the scramble, a saucy gipsy of a girl contrived to steal from the knee of the demure and well-apparelled Samuel Long, a smart handkerchief which his careful dame had tied round it to preserve his new (what is the mincing feminine word?)—his new—inexpressibles, thus reversing the story of Desdemona, and causing the new Othello to call aloud for his handkerchief, to the great diversion of the company. And so we parted; the players retired to their supper, and we to our homes; all wet through, all good-humoured and happy—except the losers.

To-day we are happy too. Hats, with ribands in them, go glancing up and down; and William Grey says, with a proud humility, "We do not challenge any parish; but if we be challenged, we are ready."

#### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. Nobody would call *Our Village*, from which this account is taken, an exciting book as a whole. Would you call this particular chapter an exception; and if so, why?
2. The reason for John Brown's absence is omitted. Can you suggest why he deserted?
3. Explain what is meant by: gasconaders, took up the glove, send to Coventry, septuagenary, defalcation, *pis-aller*, *terra incognita*, notches, Grimaldi, inexpressibles.
4. Could you tell by the way it is written that this account was composed by a lady?
5. There are some examples of *parenthesis* here. Quote them. Explain when a parenthesis is useful.

6. How do you know this is not a modern cricket match?
7. Who is the hero of the story?
8. Select an amusing incident and describe it in a single sentence.
9. What qualities as a cricketer did the captain possess? Why was he a good "skipper"?

## 19. THE WHITE TROUT

(SAMUEL LOVER)

THERE was wanst upon a time, long ago, a beautiful lady that lived in a castle upon the lake beyant, and they say she was promised to a king's son, and they wor to be married, when all of a sudden he was murdered, the crathur (Lord help us), and threwn into the lake above, and so, of course, he couldn't keep his promise to the fairy lady—and more's the pity.

Well, the story goes that she went out iv her mind, bekase av losin' the king's son—for she was tendher-hearted, God help her, like the rest iv us!—and pined away after him, until at last, no one about seen her, good or bad; and the story wint that the fairies took her away.

Well, sir, in coorse o' time, the White Throat, God bless it, was seen in the sthrame beyant, and sure the people didn't know what to think av the crathur, seein' as how a *white* trout was never heard av afor, nor since; and years upon years the trout was there, just where you seen it this blessed minit, longer nor I can tell—aye throth, and beyant the memory o' th' ouldest in the village.

At last the people began to think it must be a fairy; for what else could it be?—and no hurt nor harm was iver put on the white trout, until some wicked sinners

of sojers kem to these parts, and laughed at all the people, and giped and jeered them for thinkin' o' the likes ; and one o' them in partic'lar (bad luck to him ; God forgi' me for saying it !) swore he'd catch the throat and ate it for his dinner—the blackguard !

Well, what would you think o' the villainy of the sojer ? Sure enough he cotch the throat, and away wid him home, and puts an the fryin' pan, and into it he pitches the purty little thing. The throat squeeled all as one as a Christian crathur, and, my dear, you'd think the sojer id split his sides laughin'—for he was a harden'd villain ; and when he thought one side was done, he turns it over to fry the other ; and, what would you think, but nivver a taste of a burn was an it at all at all ; and sure the sojer thought it was a *quare* throat that could not be briled. "But," says he, "I'll give it another turn by-and-by," little thinkin' what was in store for him, the haythen.

Well, when he thought that side was done he turns it agin, and lo and behold you, nivver a taste more done that side was nor the other. "Bad luck to me," says the sojer, "but that bates the world," says he ; "but I'll thry you agin, my darlint," says he, "as cunnin' as you think yourself ;" and so with that he turns it over and over, but not a sign of the fire was on the purty throat. "Well," says the desperate villain—(for sure, sir, only he was a desperate villain *entirely*, he might know he was doing a wrong thing, seein' that all his endeavours was no good)—"Well," says he, "my jolly little throat, maybe you're fried enough, though you don't seem over well dress'd ; but you may be better than you look, like a singed cat, and a tit-bit afther all," says he ; and with that he ups with his knife and fork to taste a bit o' the throat ; but, may jew'l, the minit he puts his knife into the fish, there was a murtherin' screech, that you'd think the life id lave you if

you hurd it, and away jumps the throut out av the fryin'-pan into the middle o' the flure ; and an the spot where it fell, up riz a lovely lady—the beautifullest crathur that eyes ever seen, dressed in white, and a band o' goold in her hair, and a sthrame o' blood runnin' down her arm.

"Look where you cut me, you villain," says she, and she held out her arm to him—and, my dear, he thought the sight id lave his eyes.

"Couldn't you lave me cool and comfortable in the river where you snared me, and not disturb me in my duty ?" says she.

Well, he thrimbled like a dog in a wet sack, and at last he stammered out somethin', and begged for this life, and ax'd her ladyship's pardin, and said he didn't know she was on duty, or he was too good a sojer not to know betther nor to meddle wid her.

"I was on duty, then," says the lady ; "I was watchin' for my true love that is comin' by wather to me," says she, "an' if he comes while I'm away, an' that I miss iv him, I'll turn you into a pinkeen, and I'll hunt you up and down for evermore, while grass grows or wather runs."

Well, the sojer thought the life id lave him, at the thoughts iv his bein' turned into a pinkeen, and begged for mercy ; and with that says the lady—

"Renounce your evil coorses," says she, "you villain, or you'll repint it too late ; be a good man for the futher, and go to your duty reg'lar. And now," says she, "take me back and put me into the river again, where you found me."

"Oh, my lady," says the sojer, "how could I have the heart to drownd a beautiful lady like you ?"

But before he could say another word, the lady was vanished, and there he saw the little throut an the ground. Well, he put it in a clean plate, and away he runs for the bare life, for fear her lover would come while she was away ; and he run, and he run, even till

he came to the cave agin, and threw the throut into the river. The minit he did, the wather was as red as blood for a little while, by rayson av the cut, I suppose, until the sthrame washed the stain away; and to this day there's a little red mark an the throut's side, where it was cut.

Well, sir, from that day out the sojer was an altered man, and reformed his ways, and went to his duty reg'lar, and fasted three times a week—though it was never fish he tuk an fastin' days, for afther the fright he got, fish id never rest an his stomach—savin' your presence.

But anyhow, he was an altered man, as I said before, and in coorse o' time he left the army, and turned hermit at last; and they say he *used to pray evermore for the soul of the White Throut.*

#### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. Here is an Irish fairy tale written by a man whose sketches of Irish life used to delight readers of various Dublin periodicals nearly a hundred years ago. It is just possible that you will think stories of this kind are too young for you, but I hope not, for there is something in this particular narrative that appeals to grown-ups as well as to children. What is it, do you think? Who is supposed to be telling this story?
2. How can you guess from the manner of the telling what sort of person is being addressed?
3. This fairy tale begins in the usual way. How? And what other *usual* features does it contain?
4. What is there specially noticeable about the dialogue?
5. Which character appeals to you most? Describe this character so as to bring out the *significant* qualities.
6. Express the moral as a motto.



## 20. A BULLY SERVED OUT

(GEORGE BORROW)

AMONGST the coachmen who frequented the inn was one who was called "the bang-up coachman." He drove to our inn, in the fore part of every day, one of what were called the fast coaches, and afterwards took back the corresponding vehicle. He stayed at our house about twenty minutes, during which time the passengers of the coach which he was to return with dined; those at least who were inclined for dinner, and could pay for it. He derived his sobriquet of "the bang-up coachman" partly from his being dressed in the extremity of coach dandyism, and partly from the peculiar insolence of his manner, and the unmerciful fashion in which he was in the habit of lashing on the poor horses committed to his charge. He was a large tall fellow of about thirty, with a face which, had it not been bloated by excess, and insolence and cruelty stamped most visibly upon it, might have been called good-looking. His insolence indeed was so great that he was hated by all the minor fry connected with coaches along the road upon which he drove, especially the ostlers, whom he was continually abusing or finding fault with. Many was the hearty curse which he received when his back was turned; but the generality of people were much afraid of him, for he was a swinging strong fellow, and had the reputation of being a fighter, and in one or two instances had beaten in a barbarous manner individuals who had quarrelled with him.

I was nearly having a fracas with this worthy. One day, after he had been drinking sherry with a sprig, he swaggered into the yard where I happened to be standing; just then a waiter came by carrying upon



a tray part of a splendid Cheshire cheese, with a knife, plate, and napkin. Stopping the waiter, the coachman cut with the knife a tolerably large lump out of the very middle of the cheese, stuck it on the end of the knife, and putting it to his mouth nibbled a slight piece off it, and then, tossing the rest away with disdain, flung the knife down upon the tray, motioning the waiter to proceed: "I wish," said I, "you may not want before you die what you have just flung away," whereupon the fellow turned furiously towards me. Just then, however, his coach being standing at the door, there was a cry for coachman, so that he was forced to depart, contenting himself for the present with shaking his fist at me, and threatening to serve me out on the first opportunity; before, however, the opportunity occurred he himself got served out in a most unexpected manner.

The day after this incident he drove his coach to the inn, and after having dismounted and received the contributions of the generality of the passengers, he strutted up, with a cigar in his mouth, to an individual who had come with him, and who had just asked me a question with respect to the direction of a village about three miles off, to which he was going. "Remember the coachman," said the knight of the box to this individual, who was a thin person of about sixty, with a white hat, rather shabby black coat, and buff-coloured trousers, and who held an umbrella and a small bundle in his hand. "If you expect me to give you anything," said he to the coachman, "you are mistaken; I will give you nothing. You have been very insolent to me as I rode behind you on the coach, and have encouraged two or three trumpery fellows, who rode along with you, to cut scurvy jokes at my expense, and now you come to me for money: I am not so poor but I could have given you a shilling had you been civil; as it is, I will give you nothing." "Oh! you won't, won't you?" said the coachman; "dear

me! I hope I shan't starve because you won't give me anything—a shilling! why, I could afford to give you twenty if I thought fit, you pauper! civil to you, indeed! things are come to a fine pass if I need be civil to you! Do you know who you are speaking to? why, the best lords in the country are proud to speak to me. Why, it was only the other day that the Marquis of — said to me . . .” and then he went on to say what the Marquis said to him; after which, flinging down his cigar, he strutted up the road, swearing to himself about paupers.

“You say it is three miles to —,” said the individual to me; “I think I shall light my pipe, and smoke it as I go along.” Thereupon he took out from a side-pocket a tobacco-box and short meerschaum pipe, and implements for striking a light, filled his pipe, lighted it, and commenced smoking. Presently the coachman drew near, I saw at once that there was mischief in his eye; the man smoking was standing with his back towards him, and he came so nigh to him, seemingly purposely, that as he passed a puff of smoke came of necessity against his face. “What do you mean by smoking in my face?” said he, striking the pipe of the elderly individual out of his mouth. The other, without manifesting much surprise, said, “I thank you; and if you will wait a minute, I will give you a receipt for that favour;” then gathering up his pipe, and taking off his coat and hat, he laid them on a stepping-block which stood near, and rubbing his hands together, he advanced towards the coachman in an attitude of offence, holding his hands crossed very near to his face. The coachman, who probably expected anything but such a movement from a person of the age and appearance of the individual whom he had insulted, stood for a moment motionless with surprise; but recollecting himself, he pointed at him derisively with his finger; the next moment, however, the other was close upon him, had

struck aside the extended hand with his left fist, and given him a severe blow on the nose with his right, which he immediately followed by a left-hand blow in the eye; then drawing his body slightly backward with the velocity of lightning he struck the coachman full in the mouth: and the last blow was the severest of all, for it cut the coachman's lips nearly through; blows so quickly and sharply dealt I had never seen. The coachman reeled like a fir-tree in a gale, and seemed nearly unsensèd. "Ho! what's this? a fight! a fight!" sounded from a dozen voices, and people came running from all directions to see what was going on. The coachman, coming somewhat to himself, disencumbered himself of his coat and hat; and, encouraged by two or three of his brothers of the whip, showed some symptoms of fighting, endeavouring to close with his foe: but the attempt was vain, his foe was not to be closed with; he did not shift or dodge about, but warded off the blows of his opponent with the greatest sang-froid, always using the guard which I have already described, and putting in, in return, short chopping blows with the swiftness of lightning. In a few minutes the countenance of the coachman was literally cut to pieces, and several of his teeth were dislodged; at length he gave in; stung with mortification, however, he repented, and asked for another round; it was granted, to his own complete demolition. The coachman did not drive his coach back that day, he did not appear on the box again for a week; but he never held up his head afterwards. Before I quitted the inn, he had disappeared from the road, going no one knew where.

The coachman, as I have said before, was very much disliked upon the road, but there was an *esprit de corps* amongst the coachmen, and those who stood by did not like to see their brother chastised in such tremendous fashion. "I never saw such a fight before," said one. "Fight! why, I don't call it a fight at all,

Sergeant, who gave me further lessons, so that in a little time I became a very fair boxer, beating everybody of my own size who attacked me. The old gentleman, however, made me promise never to be quarrelsome, nor to turn his instructions to account, except in self-defence. I have always borne in mind my promise, and have made it a point of conscience never to fight unless absolutely compelled. Folks may rail against boxing if they please, but being able to box may sometimes stand a quiet man in good stead. How should I have fared to-day, but for the instructions of Sergeant Broughton? But for them, the brutal ruffian who insulted me must have passed unpunished. He will not soon forget the lesson which I have just given him—the only lesson he could understand. What would have been the use of reasoning with a fellow of that description? Brave old Broughton! I owe him much."

"And your manner of fighting," said I, "was the manner employed by Sergeant Broughton?"

"Yes," said my new acquaintance; "it was the manner in which he beat every one who attempted to contend with him, till, in an evil hour, he entered the ring with Slack, without any training or preparation, and by a chance blow lost the battle to a man who had been beaten with ease by those who, in the hands of Broughton, appeared like so many children. It was the way of fighting of him who first taught Englishmen to box scientifically, who was the head and father of the fighters of what is now called the old school, the last of which were Johnson and Big Ben."

"A wonderful man that Big Bin," said I.

"He was so," said the elderly individual; "but had it not been for Broughton, I question whether Ben would have ever been the fighter he was. Oh! there is no one like old Broughton; but for him I should at the present moment be sneaking along the

road pursued by the hissings and hootings of the dirty flatterers of that blackguard coachman.

"What did you mean," said I, "by those words of yours, that the coachmen would speedily disappear from the roads?"

"I meant," said he, "that a new method of travelling is about to be established, which will supersede the old. I am a poor engraver, as my father was before me; but engraving is an intellectual trade, and by following it, I have been brought in contact with some of the cleverest men in England. It has even made me acquainted with the projector of the scheme, which he has told me many of the wisest heads of England have been dreaming of during a period of six hundred years, and which it seems was alluded to by a certain Brazen Head in the story-book of Friar Bacon, who is generally supposed to have been a wizard, but in reality was a great philosopher. Young man, in less than twenty years, by which time I shall be dead and gone, England will be surrounded with roads of metal, on which armies may travel with mighty velocity, and of which the walls of brass and iron by which the Friar proposed to defend his native land are types."

He then, shaking me by the hand, proceeded on his way, whilst I returned to the inn.

#### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. *The Romany Rye*, by George Borrow, is a rather long book, which must be read at leisure to be enjoyed. It is written in the first person throughout. Do you think this episode taken from it gains anything by being a personal account? If so, what?
2. If you had to cut the story short, where would you stop?
3. Do you think this narrative would interest an average workman, whose chief reading is the



newspaper? Think over the question carefully and give good reasons for your answer.

4. Can you picture the coachman easily? If so, quote the particular details that most help you to do so.
5. Would you call the dialogue effective? Give a short speech that reveals the character of the speaker.
6. This story ends with a prophecy. Make one of your own after having, in imagination, dealt with a surly taxi driver.
7. Who are the persons referred to, but not seen in this episode? How are they important?
8. What was the writer doing at the inn? Are you actually told much about him?

## 21. TRIAL BY COMBAT

(SIR WALTER SCOTT)

[By means of the famous "talisman" the physician El Hakim had restored Richard Cœur-de-Lion to health. In return he begged the life of Sir Kenneth, when the latter, lured away by a trick, had left the royal standard he was guarding and returned to find it stolen. Aided by his benefactor, the knight returned in the guise of a Nubian slave to act as the king's bodyguard, and eventually identified the thief, whose guilt was decided by mortal combat.]

THE station called the Diamond of the Desert was assigned for the place of conflict as being nearly at an equal distance betwixt the Christian and Saracen camps. It was agreed that Conrade of Montserrat, the defendant, with his godfathers, the Archduke of Austria and the Grand Master of the Templars, should appear there on the day fixed for the combat, with an hundred armed followers, and no more; that Richard



of England and his brother Salisbury, who supported the accusation, should attend with the same number to protect his champion; and that the Soldan should bring with him a guard of five hundred chosen followers.

On the day before that appointed for the combat, Conrade and his friends set off by daybreak to repair to the place assigned, and Richard left the camp at the same hour, and for the same purpose; but, as had been agreed upon, he took his journey by a different route—a precaution which had been judged necessary, to prevent the possibility of a quarrel betwixt their armed attendants.

Berengaria could not help indulging some female fears when she found herself in the howling wilderness with so small an escort. But when she hinted these suspicions to Richard, he repelled them with displeasure and disdain. "It were worse than ingratitude," he said, "to doubt the good faith of the generous Soldan."

Yet the same doubts and fears recurred more than once to the firmer and more candid soul of Edith Plantagenet. Nor were these suspicions lessened when, as evening approached, they were aware of a single Arab horseman, distinguished by his turban and long lance, hovering on the edge of a small eminence like a hawk poised in the air, and who instantly, on the appearance of the royal retinue, darted off with the speed of the same bird when it shoots down the wind and disappears from the horizon.

"We must be near the station," said King Richard; "and yonder cavalier is one of Saladin's outposts; methinks I hear the noise of the Moorish horns and cymbals. Get you into order, my hearts, and form yourselves around the ladies soldier-like and firmly."

They advanced accordingly in close and firm order till they surmounted the line of low sand-hills, and

came in sight of the appointed station, when a splendid, but at the same time a startling, spectacle awaited them.

The Diamond of the Desert, so lately a solitary fountain, distinguished only amid the waste by solitary groups of palm trees, was now the centre of an encampment, the embroidered flags and gilded ornaments of which glittered far and wide, and reflected a thousand rich tints against the setting sun. The coverings of the large pavilions were of the gayest colours—scarlet, bright yellow, pale blue, and other gaudy and gleaming hues—and the tops of their pillars, or tent-poles, were decorated with golden pomegranates and small silken flags. But, besides these distinguished pavilions, there were what Thomas de Vaux considered as a portentous number of the ordinary black tents of the Arabs, being sufficient, as he conceived, to accommodate, according to the Eastern fashion, a host of five thousand men. A number of Arabs and Kurds, fully corresponding to the extent of the encampment, were hastily assembling, each leading his horse in his hand.

They soon formed a deep and confused mass of dismounted cavalry in front of their encampment, when, at the signal of a shrill cry, which arose high over the clangour of the music, each cavalier sprung to his saddle. Another shrill yell was the signal for the cavalry to advance, which they did at full gallop, disposing themselves as they came forward, so as to come in at once on the front, flanks, and rear of Richard's little bodyguard, while those in the rear discharged over the heads of both parties thick volleys of arrows. One of these struck the litter in which the Queen was seated, who loudly screamed, and the red spot was on Richard's brow in an instant.

"Ha! St. George," he exclaimed, "we must take some order with this infidel scum!"

But Edith, whose litter was near, thrust her head

out, and with her hand holding one of the shafts, exclaimed, "Royal Richard, beware what you do: see, these arrows are headless."

"Be not moved, my English hearts," Richard exclaimed to his followers: "their arrows have no heads, and their spears, too, lack the steel points. It is but a wild welcome, after their savage fashion, though doubtless they would rejoice to see us daunted or disturbed. Move onward, slow and steady."

As they had advanced nearly half-way towards the camp, the dust began to dissipate in their front, when there advanced to meet them, through that cloudy veil, a body of cavalry of a different and more regular description, completely armed with offensive and defensive weapons. This splendid troop consisted of five hundred men, and each horse which it contained was worth an earl's ransom.

This splendid array advanced to the sound of military music, and when they met the Christian body they opened their files to the right and left, and let them enter between their ranks. Richard now assumed the foremost place in his troop, aware that Saladin himself was approaching. Nor was it long when, in the centre of his bodyguard, surrounded by his domestic officers, and those hideous negroes who guard the Eastern harem, and whose misshapen forms were rendered yet more frightful by the richness of their attire, came the Soldan, with the look and manners of one on whose brow nature had written, "This is a king!" He rode a milk-white Arabian, which bore him as if conscious and proud of his noble burden.

The two heroic monarchs, for such they both were, threw themselves at once from horseback, and the troops halting and the music suddenly ceasing, they advanced to meet each other in profound silence, and, after a courteous inclination on either side, they embraced as brethren and equals.

"The Melech Ric is welcome to Saladin as water to this desert. I trust he hath no distrust of this numerous array? Excepting the armed slaves of my household, those who surround you with eyes of wonder and of welcome are, even the humblest of them, the privileged nobles of my thousand tribes; for who that could claim a title to be present would remain at home when such a prince was to be seen as Richard, with the terrors of whose name, even on the sands of Yemen, the nurse stills her child and the free Arab subdues his restive steed?"

"And these are all nobles of Araby?" said Richard, looking around.

"They claim such rank," said Saladin; "but they bear no arms but the sabre; even the iron of their lances is left behind."

"Noble Saladin," Richard said, "suspicion and thou cannot exist on the same ground. Seest thou"—pointing to the litters—"I too have brought some champions with me."

The Soldan, turning to the litters, made an obeisance as lowly as if looking towards Mecca, and kissed the sand in token of respect.

"Thou shalt see them, then, in private, brother," answered Richard.

"To what purpose?" answered Saladin mournfully. "Thy last letter was, to the hopes which I had entertained, like water to fire. But will not my brother pass to the tent which his servant hath prepared for him? My principal black slave hath taken order for the reception of the princesses; the officers of my household will attend your followers; and ourself will be the chamberlain of the royal Richard."

He led the way accordingly to a splendid pavilion, where was everything that royal luxury could devise. It was Richard's two-handed sword that chiefly attracted the attention of the Saracen—a broad straight blade, the seemingly unwieldy length of which ex-

tended wellnigh from the shoulder to the heel of the wearer.

"Might I request," said Saladin, "to see the Melech Ric strike one blow with it in peace, and in pure trial of strength?"

"Willingly, noble Saladin," answered Richard; and looking around for something whereon to exercise his strength, he saw a steel mace, held by one of the attendants, the handle being of the same metal, and about an inch and a half in diameter. This he placed on a block of wood.

The glittering broadsword, wielded by both his hands, rose aloft to the king's left shoulder, circled round his head, descended with the sway of some terrific engine, and the bar of iron rolled on the ground in two pieces, as a woodsman would sever a sapling with a hedging-bill.

"By the head of the Prophet, a most wonderful blow!" said the Soldan, critically and accurately examining the iron bar which had been cut asunder; and the blade of the sword was so well tempered as to exhibit not the least token of having suffered by the feat it had performed.

The Soldan presently said—"Something I would fain attempt, though wherefore should the weak show their inferiority in presence of the strong? Yet, each land hath its own exercises, and this may be new to the Melech Ric." So saying, he took from the floor a cushion of silk and down, and placed it upright on one end. "Can thy weapon, my brother, sever that cushion?" he said to King Richard.

"No, surely," replied the King; "no sword on earth, were it the Excalibur of Kind Arthur, can cut that which opposes no steady resistance to the blow."

Saladin unsheathed his scimitar, a curved and narrow blade of a dull blue colour. Wielding this weapon, apparently so inefficient when compared to



that of Richard, the Soldan stood resting his weight upon his left foot, then, stepping at once forward, drew the scimitar across the cushion, applying the edge so dexterously, and with so little apparent effort, that the cushion seemed rather to fall asunder than to be divided by violence.

"It is a juggler's trick," said De Vaux, darting forward ; "there is gramarye in this."

The Soldan seemed to comprehend him, for he undid the sort of veil which he had hitherto worn, laid it double along the edge of his sabre, extended the weapon edgeways in the air, and drawing it suddenly through the veil, severed that also into two parts, which floated to different sides of the tent, equally displaying the extreme temper and sharpness of the weapon and the exquisite dexterity of him who used it.

"Now, in good faith, my brother," said Richard, "thou art as expert in inflicting wounds as my sage Hakim in curing them. I trust I shall see the learned leech ; I have much to thank him for, and had brought some small present."

As he spoke, Saladin exchanged his turban for a Tartar cap.

"A miracle !—a miracle !" exclaimed Richard. "That I should lose my learned Hakim merely by absence of his cap and robe, and that I should find him again in my royal brother Saladin !"

"Such is oft the fashion of the world," answered the Soldan : "the tattered robe makes not always the dervise."

"And it was through thy intercession," said Richard, "that yonder Knight of the Leopard was saved from death ; and by thy artifice that he revisited my camp in disguise ?"

"Even so," replied Saladin ; "I was physician enough to know that, unless the wounds of his bleeding honour were stanchd, the days of his life must be



few. His disguise was more easily penetrated than I had expected from the success of my own."

"An accident," said King Richard, "let me first know that his skin was artificially discoloured; and that hint once taken, detection became easy, for his form and person are not to be forgotten. I confidently expect that he will do battle on the morrow."

"He is full in preparation and high in hope," said the Soldan. "I have furnished him with weapons and horse, thinking nobly of him from what I have seen under various disguises."

"Knows he now," said Richard, "to whom he lies under obligation?"

"He doth," replied the Saracen. "I was obliged to confess my person when I unfolded my purpose."

"And confessed he aught to you?" said the King of England.

"Nothing explicit," replied the Soldan; "but from much that passed between us, I conceive his love is too highly placed to be happy in its issue."

"And thou knowest that his daring and insolent passion crossed thine own wishes?" said Richard.

"I might guess to much," said Saladin; "but his passion had existed ere my wishes had been formed; and, I must now add, is likely to survive them. I cannot, in honour, revenge me for my disappointment on him who had no hand in it."

The Saracen monarch departed from King Richard's tent, and having indicated to him, rather with signs than with speech, where the pavilion of the Queen and her attendants was pitched, he went to receive the Marquis of Montserrat and his attendants, for whom, with less goodwill, but with equal splendour, the magnificent Soldan had provided accommodations. Ere Richard had finished his meal, the ancient *omrah*, who had brought the Soldan's letter to the Christian camp, entered with a plan of the ceremonial to be observed on the succeeding day of combat.

The King then addressed himself to settle the articles of combat, which cost a considerable time, as it was necessary on some points to consult with the opposite parties, as well as with the Soldan.

They were at length fully agreed upon, and adjusted by a protocol in French and in Arabian, which was subscribed by Saladin as umpire of the field, and by Richard and Leopold as guarantees for the two combatants. As the *omrah* took his final leave of King Richard for the evening, De Vaux entered.

"The good knight," he said, "who is to do battle to-morrow requests to know whether he may not to-night pay duty to his royal godfather?"

"Hast thou seen him, De Vaux?" said the King, smiling; "and didst thou know an ancient acquaintance?"

"By our Lady of Lanercost," answered De Vaux, "I scarce knew Sir Kenneth of Scotland till his good hound, that had been for a short while under my care, came and fawned on me."

"Thou art better skilled in brutes than men, De Vaux," said the King.

"I will not deny," said De Vaux, "I have found them oft-times the honester animals. Also, your Grace is pleased to term me sometimes a brute myself; besides that I serve the Lion, whom all men acknowledge the King of brutes."

"By St. George, there thou brokest thy lance fairly on my brow," said the King. "I have ever said thou hast a sort of wit, De Vaux—marry, one must strike thee with a sledge-hammer ere it can be made to sparkle. But to the present gear: is the good knight well armed and equipped?"

"Fully, my liege, and nobly," answered De Vaux.

"Tell me," said Richard, "for it is of interest, hath the knight a confessor?"

"He hath," answered De Vaux. "The hermit of Engaddi, who erst did him that office when preparing

for death, attends him on the present occasion, the fame of the duel having brought him hither."

"'Tis well," said Richard; "and now for the knight's request. Say to him, Richard will receive him when the discharge of his devoir beside the Diamond of the Desert shall have atoned for his fault beside the Mount of St. George; and as thou passest through the camp, let the Queen know I will visit her pavilion; and tell Blondel to meet me there."

In the interior of the pavilion they found Thomas de Vaux in attendance on the Queen. While Berengaria welcomed Blondel, King Richard spoke for some time secretly and apart with his fair kinswoman.

At length, "Are we still foes, my fair Edith?" he said, in a whisper.

"No, my liege," said Edith, in a voice just so low as not to interrupt the music: "none can bear enmity against King Richard, when he deigns to show himself, as he really is, generous and noble, as well as valiant and honourable." So saying, she extended her hand to him.

The King kissed it in token of reconciliation, and then proceeded: "Conrade of Montserrat is held a good lance. What if the Scot should lose the day?"

"It is impossible!" said Edith firmly. "My own eyes saw yonder Conrade tremble and change colour, like a base thief. He is guilty, and the trial by combat is an appeal to the justice of God. I myself, in such a cause, would encounter him without fear."

It had been agreed, on account of the heat of the climate, that the judicial combat, which was the cause of the present assemblage of various nations at the Diamond of the Desert, should take place at one hour after sunrise.

Long before daybreak, the lists were surrounded by even a larger number of Saracens than Richard had seen on the preceding evening. When the first ray of the sun's glorious orb arose above the desert, the sonor-

ous call "To prayer—to prayer!" was poured forth by the Soldan himself, and answered by others, whose rank and zeal entitled them to act as muezzins.

Meantime the sponsors of both champions went, as was their duty, to see that they were duly armed, and prepared for combat. The Archduke of Austria was in no hurry to perform this part of the ceremony, having had rather an unusually severe debauch upon wine of Schiraz the preceding evening. But the Grand Master of the Temple, more deeply concerned in the event of the combat, was early before the tent of Conrade of Montserrat. To his great surprise, the attendants refused him admittance.

"Do you not know me, ye knaves?" said the Grand Master, in great anger.

"We do, most valiant and reverend," answered Conrade's squire; "but even *you* may not at present enter: the Marquis is about to confess himself."

"Confess himself!" exclaimed the Templar, and entered the tent almost by force.

The Marquis of Montserrat was kneeling at the feet of the hermit of Engaddi, and in the act of beginning his confession.

"What means this, Marquis?" said the Grand Master. "Hermit—prophet—madman, say, if thou darest, in what thou excellest me? The Marquis shall not confess this morning, unless it be to me, for I part not from his side."

"Is this *your* pleasure?" said the hermit to Conrade; "for think not I will obey that proud man, if you continue to desire my assistance."

"Alas," said Conrade irresolutely, "what would you have me say? Farewell for a while; we will speak anon."

"Unhappy man, farewell, not for a while, but until we both shall meet—no matter where. And for thee," he added, turning to the Grand Master, "TREMBLE!"

"Tremble!" replied the Templar contemptuously, "I cannot, if I would."

The hermit heard not his answer, having left the tent.

"Come, to this gear hastily," said the Grand Master, "since thou wilt needs go through the foolery."

"No," said Conrade, "I will rather die unconfessed than mock the sacrament."

"Come, noble Marquis," said the Templar, "rouse up your courage, and speak not thus. In an hour's time thou shalt stand victorious in the lists, or confess thee in thy helmet like a valiant knight. Come, squires and armourers, your master must be accounted for the field."

The attendants entered accordingly, and began to arm the Marquis.

"What morning is without?" said Conrade.

"The sun rises dimly," answered a squire.

"Thou seest, Grand Master," said Conrade, "nought smiles on us."

"Thou wilt fight the more coolly, my son," answered the Templar; "thank Heaven, that hath tempered the sun of Palestine to suit thine occasion."

"This craven," he thought, "will lose the day in pure faintness and cowardice of heart. But, come what will, he must have no other confessor than myself; our sins are too much in common, and he might confess my share with his own."

The hour at length arrived, the trumpets sounded, the knights rode into the lists armed at all points, and mounted like men who were to do battle for a kingdom's honour. They wore their visors up, and riding around the lists three times, showed themselves to the spectators. Both were goodly persons, and both had noble countenances. But there was an air of manly confidence on the brow of the Scot—a radiancy of hope, which amounted even to cheerfulness; while, although pride and effort had recalled much of Con-

rade's natural courage, there lowered still on his brow a cloud of ominous despondence.

A temporary alter was erected just beneath the gallery occupied by the Queen, and beside it stood the hermit in the dress of his order as a Carmelite friar. To this alter the challenger and defender were successively brought forward, conducted by their respective sponsors. Dismounting before it, each knight avouched the justice of his cause by a solemn oath on the Evangelists, and prayed that his success might be according to the truth or falsehood of what he then swore. They also made oath that they came to do battle in knightly guise, and with the usual weapons, disclaiming the use of spells, charms, or magical devices, to incline victory to their side.

The priests, after a solemn prayer that God would show the rightful quarrel, departed from the lists. The trumpets of the challenger then rung a flourish, and a herald-at-arms proclaimed at the eastern end of the lists—"Here stands a good knight, Sir Kenneth of Scotland, champion for the royal King Richard of England, who accuseth Conrade Marquis of Montserrat of foul treason and dishonour done to the said king."

When the words Kenneth of Scotland announced the name and character of the champion, hitherto scarce generally known, a loud and cheerful acclaim burst from the followers of King Richard, and hardly, notwithstanding repeated commands of silence, suffered the reply of the defendant to be heard. He, of course, avouched his innocence, and offered his body for battle. The esquires of the combatants now approached, and delivered to each his shield and lance, assisting to hang the former around his neck, that his two hands might remain free, one for the management of the bridle, the other to direct the lance.

The shield of the Scot displayed his old bearing, the leopard, but with the addition of a collar and broken



chain, in allusion to his late captivity. The shield of the Marquis bore, in reference to his title, a serrated and rocky mountain. Each shook his lance aloft, as if to ascertain the weight and toughness of the unwieldy weapon, and then laid it in the rest. The sponsors, heralds, and squires now retired to the barriers, and the combatants sat opposite to each other, face to face, with couched lance and closed visor. They stood thus for perhaps three minutes, when, at a signal given by the Soldan, an hundred instruments rent the air with their brazen clamours, and each champion striking his horse with the spurs and slacking the rein, the horses started into full gallop, and the knights men in mid space with a shock like a thunderbolt. The victory was not in doubt—no, not one moment. Conrade, indeed, showed himself a practised warrior; for he struck his antagonist knightly in the midst of his shield, bearing his lance so straight and true that it shattered into splinters. The horse of Sir Kenneth recoiled, two or three yards and fell on his haunches, but the rider easily raised him with hand and rein. But for Conrade there was no recovery. Sir Kenneth's lance had pierced through the shield, through a plated corslet of Milan steel, through a "secret" or coat of linked mail worn beneath the corslet, had wounded him deep in the bosom, and borne him from his saddle, leaving the truncheon of the lance fixed in his wound. The sponsors, heralds, and Saladin himself, descending from his throne, crowded around the wounded man; while Sir Kenneth, who had drawn his sword ere yet he discovered his antagonist was totally helpless, now commanded him to avow his guilt. The helmet was hastily unclosed, and the wounded man, gazing wildly on the skies, replied—"What would you more? God hath decided justly: I am guilty; but there are worse traitors in the camp than I. In pity to my soul, let me have a confessor!"

He revived as he uttered these words.

"The talisman—the powerful remedy, royal brother!" said King Richard to Saladin.

"The traitor," answered the Soldan, "is more fit to be dragged from the lists to the gallows by the heels than to profit by its virtues; and some such fate is in his look," he added, after gazing fixedly upon the wounded man; "for, though his wound may be cured, yet Azrael's seal is on the wretch's brow."

"Nevertheless," said Richard, "I pray you do for him what you may, that he may at least have time for confession. Slay not soul and body. To him one half-hour of time may be worth more, by ten thousand-fold, than the life of the oldest patriarch."

"My royal brother's wish shall be obeyed," said Saladin. "Slaves, bear this wounded man to our tent."

"Do not so," said the Templar, who had hitherto stood gloomily looking on in silence. "The royal Duke of Austria and myself will not permit this unhappy Christian prince to be delivered over to the Saracens, that they may try their spells upon him. We are his sponsors, and demand that he be assigned to our care."

"That is, you refuse the certain means offered to recover him," said Richard.

"Brave Knight of the Leopard," said Cœur-de-Lion, turning to the Scottish warrior, "thou hast shown that the Ethiopian *may* change his skin, and the leopard his spots, though clerks quote Scripture for the impossibility. Yet I have more to say to you when I have conducted you to the presence of the ladies, the best judges and best rewarders of deeds of chivalry."

The Knight of the Leopard bowed assent.

"And thou, princely Saladin, wilt also attend them. I promise thee our Queen will not think herself welcome, if she lacks the opportunity to thank her royal host for her most princely reception."

Saladin bent his head gracefully, but declined the invitation.

Richard, it may be believed, respected the motives of delicacy which flowed from manners so different from his own, and urged his request no further.

"At noon," said the Soldan, as he departed, "I trust ye will all accept a collation under the black camel-skin tent of a chief of Kurdistan."

The victor entered the pavilion of Queen Berengaria supported on either side by his sponsors, Richard and William Long-Sword, and knelt gracefully down before the Queen, though more than half the homage was silently rendered to Edith, who sat on her right hand.

"Unarm him, my mistresses," said the King, whose delight was in the execution of such chivalrous usages. "Let beauty honour chivalry! Undo his spurs, Berengaria; Queen though thou be, thou owest him what marks of favour thou canst give. Unlace his helmet, Edith—by this hand thou shalt, wert thou the proudest Plantagenet of the line, and he the poorest knight on earth!"

"And what expect you from beneath his iron shell?" said Richard, as the removal of the casque gave to view the noble countenance of Sir Kenneth, his face glowing with recent exertion, and not less so with present emotion. "What think ye of him, gallants and beauties?" said Richard. "Doth he resemble an Ethiopian slave, or doth he present the face of an obscure and nameless adventurer? No, by my good sword! Here terminate his various disguises. He hath knelt down before you unknown save by his worth; he arises equally distinguished by birth and fortune. The adventurous knight, Kenneth, arises David, Earl of Huntingdon, Prince Royal of Scotland!"

## COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. Many of you will have read *The Talisman* and will know the cause of Sir Kenneth's disgrace. What reference is made to it in the above narrative?
2. Note how Scott tries to make the past *live*. Do you think he succeeds?
3. What ideas about Chivalry can you glean from this story?
4. The characters of Richard and Saladin form "a study in contrasts." How?
5. Why is the end of the story effective?
6. What other result is likely to happen besides Sir Kenneth's restoration to royal favour?
7. How might it be said that he and Saladin were friends and rivals?
8. Contrast the two royal ladies mentioned.
9. What other methods of trial have you read of in English history? Why was trial by combat considered conclusive?
10. Which part of the story contains the best description?

## 22. AN INTERRUPTED WEDDING

(THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK)

"THE abbot, in his alb arrayed," stood at the altar in the abbey-chapel of Rubygill, with all his plump, sleek, rosy friars, in goodly lines disposed, to solemnize the nuptials of the beautiful Matilda Fitzwater, daughter of the Baron of Arlingford, with the noble Robert Fitz-Ooth, Earl of Locksley and Huntingdon. The abbey of Rubygill stood in a picturesque valley, at a little distance from the western boundary of Sherwood Forest, in a spot which seemed adapted by nature to be the retreat of monastic mortification, being on the banks of a fine trout-stream, and in the

midst of woodland coverts, abounding with excellent game. The bride, with her father and attendant maidens, entered the chapel; but the earl had not arrived. The baron was amazed, and the bride-maidens were disconcerted. Matilda feared that some evil had befallen her lover, but felt no diminution of her confidence in his honour and love. Through the open gates of the chapel she looked down the narrow road that wound along the side of the hill; and her ear was the first that heard the distant trampling of horses, and her eye was the first that caught the glitter of snowy plumes and the light of polished spears. "It is strange," thought the baron, "that the earl should come in this martial array to his wedding;" but he had not long to meditate on the phenomenon, for the foaming steeds swept up to the gate like a whirlwind, and the earl, breathless with speed, and followed by a few of his yeomen, advanced to his smiling bride. It was then no time to ask questions, for the organ was in full peal, and the choristers were in full voice.

The abbot began to intone the ceremony in a style of modulation impressively exalted, his voice issuing most canonically from the roof of his mouth, through the medium of a very musical nose newly tuned for the occasion. But he had not proceeded far enough to exhibit all the variety and compass of this melodious instrument, when a noise was heard at the gate, and a party of armed men entered the chapel. The song of the choristers died away in a shake of demisemi-quavers, contrary to all the rules of psalmody. The organ-blower, who was working his musical air-pump with one hand, and with two fingers and a thumb of the other insinuating a peeping place through the curtain of the organ-gallery, was struck motionless by the double operation of curiosity and fear; while the organist, intent only on his performance, and spreading all his fingers to strike a swell of magnificent

chords, felt his harmonic spirit ready to desert his body on being answered by the ghastly rattle of empty keys, and in the consequent *agitato furioso* of the internal movements of his feelings, was preparing to restore harmony by the *segue subito* of an *appoggiatura con foco* with the corner of a book of anthems on the head of his neglectful assistant, when his hand and his attention together were arrested by the scene below. The voice of the abbot subsided into silence through a descending scale of long-drawn melody, like the sound of the ebbing sea to the explorers of a cave. In a few moments all was silence, interrupted only by the iron tread of the armed intruders, as it rang on the marble floor and echoed from the vaulted aisles.

The leader strode up to the altar; and placing himself opposite to the abbot, and between the earl and Matilda, in such a manner that the four together seemed to stand on the four points of a diamond, exclaimed, "In the name of King Henry, I forbid the ceremony, and attach Robert Earl of Huntingdon as a traitor!" and at the same time he held his drawn sword between the lovers, as if to emblem that royal authority which laid its temporal ban upon their contract. The earl drew his own sword instantly, and struck down the interposing weapon; then clasped his left arm round Matilda, who sprang into his embrace, and held his sword before her with his right hand. His yeomen ranged themselves at his side, and stood with their swords drawn, still and prepared, like men determined to die in his defence. The soldiers, confident in superiority of numbers, paused. The abbot took advantage of the pause to introduce a word of exhortation. "My children," said he, "if you are going to cut each other's throats, I entreat you, in the name of peace and charity, to do it our of the chapel."

"Sweet Matilda," said the earl, "did you give your love to the Earl of Huntingdon, whose lands touch the



Ouse and the Trent, or to Robert Fitz-Ooth, the son of his mother?"

"Neither to the earl nor his earldom," answered Matilda firmly, "but to Robert Fitz-Ooth and his love."

"That I well knew," said the earl; "and though the ceremony be incomplete, we are not the less married in the eye of my only saint, our Lady, who will yet bring us together. Lord Fitzwater, to your care, for the present, I commit your daughter.—Nay, sweet Matilda, part we must for a while; but we will soon meet under brighter skies, and be this the seal of our faith."

He kissed Matilda's lips, and consigned her to the baron, who glowered about him with an expression of countenance that showed he was mortally wroth with somebody; but whatever he thought or felt he kept to himself. The earl, with a sign to his followers, made a sudden charge on the soldiers, with the intention of cutting his way through. The soldiers were prepared for such an occurrence, and a desperate skirmish succeeded. Some of the women screamed, but none of them fainted; for fainting was not so much the fashion in those days, when the ladies breakfasted on brawn and ale at sunrise, as in our more refined age of green tea and muffins at noon. Matilda seemed disposed to fly again to her lover, but the baron forced her from the chapel. The earl's bowmen at the door sent in among the assailants a volley of arrows, one of which whizzed past the ear of the abbot, who, in mortal fear of being suddenly translated from a ghostly friar into a friarly ghost, began to roll out of the chapel as fast as his bulk and his holy robes would permit, roaring "Sacrilege!" with all his monks at his heels, who were, like himself, more intent to go at once than to stand upon the order of their going. The abbot, thus pressed from behind, and stumbling over his own drapery before, fell suddenly

prostrate in the doorway that connected the chapel with the abbey, and was instantaneously buried under a pyramid of ghastly carcasses, that fell over him and each other, and lay a rolling chaos of animated rotundities, sprawling and bawling in unseemly disarray, and sending forth the names of all the saints in and out of heaven, amidst the clashing of swords, the ringing of bucklers, the clattering of helmets, the twanging of bow-strings, the whizzing of arrows, the screams of women, the shouts of the warriors, and the vociferations of the peasantry, who had been assembled to the intended nuptials, and who, seeing a fair set-to, contrived to pick a quarrel among themselves on the occasion, and proceeded, with staff and cudgel, to crack each other's skulls for the good of the king and the earl. One tall friar alone was untouched by the panic of his brethren, and stood steadfastly watching the combat with his arms akimbo, the colossal emblem of an unarmed neutrality.

At length, through the midst of the internal confusion, the earl, by the help of his good sword, the staunch valour of his men, and the blessing of the Virgin, fought his way to the chapel-gate—his bowmen closed him in—he vaulted into his saddle, clapped spurs to his horse, rallied his men on the first eminence, and exchanged his sword for a bow and arrow, with which he did execution among the pursuers, who at last thought it most expedient to desist from offensive warfare, and to retreat into the abbey, where, in the king's name, they broached a pipe of the best wine, and attached all the venison in the larder, having first carefully unpacked the tuft of friars, and set the fallen abbot on his legs.

The friars, it may be well supposed, and such of the king's men as escaped unhurt from the affray, found their spirits a cup too low, and kept the flask moving from noon till night. The peaceful brethren, unused to the tumult of war, had undergone, from fear

and discomposure, an exhaustion of animal spirits that required extraordinary refection. During the repast they interrogated Sir Ralph Montfaucon, the leader of the soldiers, respecting the nature of the earl's offence.

"A complication of offences," replied Sir Ralph, "superinduced on the original basis of forest-treason. He began with hunting the king's deer, in despite of all remonstrance; followed it up by contempt of the king's mandates, and by armed resistance to his power, in defiance of all authority; and combined with it the resolute withholding of payment of certain moneys to the abbot of Doncaster, in denial of all law; and has thus made himself the declared enemy of church and state, and all for being too fond of venison." And the knight helped himself to half a pasty.

"A heinous offender," said a little round oily friar, appropriating the portion of pasty which Sir Ralph had left.

"The earl is a worthy peer," said the tall friar whom we have already mentioned in the chapel scene, "and the best marksman in England."

"Why, this is flat treason, brother Michael," said the little round friar, "to call an attainted traitor a worthy peer."

"I pledge you," said brother Michael. The little friar smiled and filled his cup. "He will draw the long bow," pursued brother Michael, "with any bold yeoman among them all."

"Don't talk of the long bow," said the abbot, who had the sound of the arrow still whizzing in his ear: "what have we pillars of the faith to do with the long bow?"

"Be that as it may," said Sir Ralph, "he is an outlaw from this moment."

"So much the worse for the law then," said brother Michael. "The law will have a heavier miss of him

than he will have of the law. He will strike as much venison as ever, and more of other game. I know what I say ; but *basta* : Let us drink."

"What other game?" said the little friar. "I hope he won't poach among our partridges."

"Poach ! not he," said brother Michael : "if he wants your partridges, he will strike them under your nose (here's to you), and drag your trout-stream for you on a Thursday evening."

"Monstrous ! and strave us on fast-day," said the little friar.

"But that is not the game I mean," said brother Michael.

"Surely, son Michael," said the abbot, "you do not mean to insinuate that the noble earl will turn freebooter ?"

"A man must live," said brother Michael, "earl or no. If the law takes his rents and beeves without his consent, he must take beeves and rents where he can get them without the consent of the law. This is the *lex talionis*."

"Truly," said Sir Ralph, "I am sorry for the damsel : she seems fond of this wild runagate."

"A mad girl, a mad girl," said the little friar.

"How a mad girl?" said brother Michael. "Has she not beauty, grace, wit, sense, discretion, dexterity, learning, and valour ?"

"Learning !" exclaimed the little friar ; "what has a woman to do with learning ? And valour ! who ever heard a woman commended for valour ? Meekness and mildness, and softness, and gentleness, and tenderness, and humility, and obedience to her husband, and faith in her confessor, and domesticity, or, as learned doctors call it, the faculty of stayathome-itenesss, and embroidery, and music, and pickling, and preserving, and the whole complex and multiplex detail of the noble science of dinner, as well in preparation for the table, as in arrangement over it, and in

distribution around it to knights, and squires, and ghostly friars—these are female virtues: but valour—why, who ever heard——”

“She is the all in all,” said brother Michael, “gentle as a ring-dove, yet high-soaring as a falcon: humble below her deserving, yet deserving beyond the estimate of panegyric: an exact economist in all superfluity, yet a most bountiful dispenser in all liberality: the chief regulator of her household, the fairest pillar of her hall, and the sweetest blossom of her bower: having, in all opposite proposings, sense to understand, judgment to weigh, discretion to choose, firmness to undertake, diligence to conduct, perseverance to accomplish, and resolution to maintain. For obedience to her husband, that is not to be tried till she has one: for faith in her confessor, she has as much as the law prescribes: for embroidery an Arachne: for music a Siren: and for pickling and preserving, did not one of her jars of sugared apricots give you your last surfeit at Arlingford Castle?”

“Call you that preserving?” said the little friar; “I call it destroying. Call you it pickling? Truly it pickled me. My life was saved by miracle.”

“By canary,” said brother Michael. “Canary is the only life preserver, the true *aurum potabile*, the universal panacea for all diseases, thirst, and short life. Your life was saved by canary.”

“Indeed, reverend father,” said Sir Ralph, “if the young lady be half what you describe, she must be a paragon; but your commending her for valour does somewhat amaze me.”

“She can fence,” said the little friar, “and draw the long bow, and play at single-stick, and quarter-staff.”

“Yet mark you,” said brother Michael, “not like a virago or a hoyden, or one that would crack a serving-man’s head for spilling gravy on her ruff, but with such womanly grace and temperate self-command as

if those manly exercises belonged to her only, and were become for her sake feminine."

"You incite me," said Sir Ralph, "to view her more nearly. That madcap earl found me other employment than to remark her in the chapel."

"The earl is a worthy peer," said brother Michael; "he is worth any fourteen earls on this side Trent, and any seven on the other." (The reader will please to remember that Rubygill Abbey was *north* of Trent.)

"His mettle will be tried," said Sir Ralph. "There is many a courtier will swear to King Henry to bring him in dead or alive."

"They must look to the brambles then," said brother Michael—

"The bramble, the bramble, the bonny forest bramble,  
Doth make a jest  
Of silken vest,

That will through greenwood scramble :

The bramble, the bramble, the bonny forest bramble."

"Plague on your lungs, son Michael," said the abbot; "this is your old coil: always roaring in your cups."

"I know what I say," said brother Michael; "there is often more sense in an old song than in a new homily—

"The courtly pad doth amble,  
When his gay lord would ramble :

But both may catch

An awkward scratch,

If they ride among the bramble :

The bramble, the bramble, the bonny forest bramble."

"Tall friar," said Sir Ralph, "either you shoot the shafts of your merriment at random, or you know more of the earl's designs than beseems your frock."



"Let my frock," said brother Michael, "answer for its own sins. It is worn past covering mine. It is too weak for a shield, too transparent for a screen, too thin for a shelter, too light for gravity, and too threadbare for a jest. The wearer would be naught indeed who should misbeseem such a wedding garment—

"But wherefore does the sheep wear wool?  
That he in season sheared may be,  
And the shepherd be warm though his flock be cool:  
*So I'll have a new cloak about me.*"

## COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. This is the opening chapter of a book about the Greenwood, whose title, *Maid Marian*, will suggest to you the popular name of the hero. What indication is given of his future fame as an outlaw?
2. There is a great deal of humour in the story. Against whom is it directed?
3. What famous poem does this incident remind you of?
4. The vocabulary is perhaps a little difficult. Does the story gain or lose by the author's use of long words?
5. Would you call any of the descriptions picturesque? If so, which?
6. Express simply the reasons for the attempted arrest of Robert Fitz-Ooth.
7. Can you guess the part likely to be played in the rest of the book by brother Michael? What point is there in his songs?
8. Would this episode make a good introduction to a film. If so, why?
9. In what way is Matilda a romantic heroine?

## 23. ROAST PIG

(CHARLES LAMB)

MANKIND, says a Chinese manuscript, which my friend M. was obliging enough to read and explain to me, for the first seventy thousand ages ate their meat raw, clawing or biting it from the living animal, just as they do in Abyssinia to this day. This period is not obscurely hinted at by their great Confucius in the second chapter of his Mundane Mutations, where he designates a kind of golden age by the term Chofang, literally the Cooks' Holiday. The manuscript goes on to say, that the art of roasting, or rather broiling (which I take to be the elder brother) was accidentally discovered in the manner following. The swineherd, Ho-ti, having gone out into the woods one morning, as his manner was, to collect mast for his hogs, left his cottage in the care of his eldest son Bo-bo, a great lubberly boy, who being fond of playing with fire, as youngers of his age commonly are, let some sparks escape into a bundle of straw, which kindling quickly, spread the conflagration over every part of their poor mansion, till it was reduced to ashes. Together with the cottage (a sorry antediluvian makeshift of a building, you may think it), what was of much more importance, a fine litter of new-farrowed pigs, no less than nine in number, perished. China pigs have been esteemed a luxury all over the East, from the remotest periods that we read of. Bo-bo was in the utmost consternation, as you may think, not so much for the sake of the tenement, which his father and he could easily build up again with a few dry branches, and the labour of an hour or two, at any time, as for the loss of the pigs. While he was thinking what he should say to his father, and wringing his hands over the smoking remnants of one

of those untimely sufferers, an odour assailed his nostrils, unlike any scent which he had before experienced. What could it proceed from?—not from the burnt cottage—he had smelt that smell before—indeed, this was by no means the first accident of the kind which had occurred through the negligence of this unlucky young firebrand. Much less did it resemble that of any known herb, weed, or flower. A premonitory moistening at the same time overflowed his nether lip. He knew not what to think. He next stooped down to feel the pig, if there were any signs of life in it. He burnt his fingers, and to cool them he applied them in his booby fashion to his mouth. Some of the crumbs of the scorched skin had come away with his fingers, and for the first time in his life (in the world's life indeed, for before him no man had known it) he tasted—*crackling*! Again he felt and fumbled at the pig. It did not burn him so much now, still he licked his fingers from a sort of habit. The truth at length broke into his slow understanding, that it was the pig that smelt so, and the pig that tasted so delicious; and surrendering himself up to the new-born pleasure, he fell to tearing up whole handfuls of the scorched skin with the flesh next it, and was cramming it down his throat in his beastly fashion, when his sire entered amid the smoking rafters, armed with retributory cudgel, and finding how affairs stood, began to rain blows upon the young rogue's shoulders, as thick as hailstones, which Bo-bo heeded not any more than if they had been flies. The tickling pleasure, which he experienced in his lower regions, had rendered him quite callous to any inconveniences he might feel in those remote quarters. His father might lay on, but he could not beat him from his pig, till he had fairly made an end of it, when, becoming a little more sensible of his situation, something like the following dialogue ensued.

"You graceless whelp, what have you got there-

devouring? Is it not enough that you have burnt me down three houses with your dog's tricks, and be hanged to you! but you must be eating fire, and I know not what—what have you got there, I say?"

"O father, the pig, the pig! do come and taste how nice the burnt pig eats."

The ears of Ho-ti tingled with horror. He cursed his son, and he cursed himself that ever he should beget a son that should eat burnt pig.

Bo-bo, whose scent was wonderfully sharpened since morning, soon raked out another pig, and fairly rending it asunder, thrust the lesser half by main force into the fists of Ho-ti, still shouting out, "Eat, eat, eat the burnt pig, father, only taste—O Lord!"—with such-like barbarous ejaculations, cramming all the while as if he would choke.

Ho-ti trembled in every joint while he grasped the abominable thing, wavering whether he should not put his son to death for an unnatural young monster, when the crackling scorching his fingers, as it had done his son's, and applying the same remedy to them, he in his turn tasted some of its flavour, which, make what sour mouths he would for a pretence, proved not altogether displeasing to him. In conclusion (for the manuscript here is a little tedious), both father and son fairly set down to the mess, and never left off till they had dispatched all that remained of the litter.

Bo-bo was strictly enjoined not to let the secret escape, for the neighbours would certainly have stoned them for a couple of abominable wretches, who could think of improving upon the good meat which God had sent them. Nevertheless, strange stories got about. It was observed that Ho-ti's cottage was burnt down now more frequently than ever. Nothing but fires from this time forward. Some would break out in broad day, others in the night-time. As often as the sow farrowed, so sure was the house of Ho-ti to be in a blaze; and Ho-to himself, which was the more remark-

able, instead of chastising his son, seemed to grow more indulgent to him than ever. At length they were watched, the terrible mystery discovered, and father and son summoned to take their trial at Pekin, then an inconsiderable assize town. Evidence was given, the obnoxious food itself produced in court, and verdict about to be pronounced, when the foreman of the jury begged that some of the burnt pig, of which the culprits stood accused, might be handed into the box. He handled it, and they all handled it; and burning their fingers, as Bo-bo and his father had done before them, and nature prompting to each of them the same remedy, against the face of all the facts, and the clearest charge which judge had ever given—to the surprise of the whole court, townsfolk, strangers, reporters, and all present—without leaving the box, or any manner of consultation whatever, they brought in a simultaneous verdict of Not Guilty.

The judge, who was a shrewd fellow, winked, at the manifest iniquity of the decision: and when the court was dismissed, went privily and bought up all the pigs that could be had for love or money. In a few days his lordship's town-house was observed to be on fire. The thing took wing, and now there was nothing to be seen but fires in every direction. Fuel and pigs grew enormously dear all over the district. The insurance offices one and all shut up shop. People built slighter and slighter every day, until it was feared that the very science of architecture would in on long time be lost to the world. Thus this custom of firing houses continued, till in process of time, says my manuscript, a sage arose, like our Locke, who made a discovery that the flesh of swine, or indeed of any other animal, might be cooked (*burnt*, as they called it) without the necessity of consuming a whole house to dress it. Then first began the rude form of a gridiron. Roasting by the string or spit came in a century or two later, I forget in whose dynasty. By such slow degrees, con-

cludes the manuscript, do the most useful, and seemingly the most obvious, arts make their way among mankind.

### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. The above narrative occurs in one of the *Essays of Elia*. Does it make a good story? If so, why?
2. Note the beginning and the ending. Are they effective?
3. Quote some of the phrases used in describing Bo-bo.
4. How is a humorous effect obtained in this story?
5. What do you think of this explanation of the origin of roast pig? Is it ingenious?
6. Give some examples of the methods used by the author to give his essay an appropriate Chinese setting.
7. What references are made to famous people?
8. Criticize the vocabulary used in this story?

## 24. THE STORY OF ABSALOM

### (THE BIBLE)

AND it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel.

And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee.

Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge



in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice !

And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.

And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment : so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the Lord, in Hebron.

For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the Lord shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord.

And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron.

But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.

And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called ; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing.

And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong : for the people increased continually with Absalom.

And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.

And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee ; for we shall not else escape from Absalom : make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.

And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold,

thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.

And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off.

And David numbered the people that were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them.

And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also.

But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth : for if we flee away, they will not care for us ; neither if half of us die, will they care for us : but now thou art worth ten thousand of us : therefore now it is better that thou succour us out to the city.

And the king said unto them, What seemeth you best I will do. And the king stood by the gate side, and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands.

And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.

So the people went out into the field against Israel : and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim ;

Where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men.

For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country : and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold

of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth ; and the mule that was under him went away.

And a certain man saw it, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak.

And Joab said unto the man that told him, And, behold, thou sawest him, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground ? and I would have given thee ten shekels of silver, and a girdle.

And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son : for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom.

Otherwise I should have wrought falsehood against mine own life : for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldest have set thyself against me.

Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak.

And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him.

And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel : for Joab held back the people.

And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him : and all Israel fled every one to his tent.

Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale : for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance : and he called the pillar after his own name : and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place.

Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now

run, and bear the king tidings, how that the Lord hath avenged him of his enemies.

And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day : but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead.

Then said Joab to Cush, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cush bowed himself unto Joab, and ran.

Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cush. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready ?

But howsoever, said he, let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cush.

And David sat between the two gates : and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and beheld a man running alone.

And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near.

And the watchman saw another man running : and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold another man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings.

And the watchman said, Me thinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings.

And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the Lord thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.

And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe ? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's

servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was.

And the king said unto him, Turn aside, and stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still.

And, behold, Cushie came ; and Cushie said, Tidings, my lord the king : for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.

And the king said unto Cushie, Is the young man Absalom safe ? And Cushie answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.

And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept : and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom ! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son !

#### COMMENTS AND EXERCISES

1. Some of the finest stories in our literature are to be found in the Bible. Here is one of them, dealing with a conspiracy and its results. How is the tragedy of the situation brought out ?
2. Why is the introduction especially useful ?
3. Note the simplicity of the style. The number of adjectives is small, yet the effect is vigorous and graphic. Select a passage to prove this.
4. What is the keynote of the character of David as represented here ?
5. Who is the villain of the piece, and why ?
6. Why do you suppose this is a favourite story from the Bible ?

THE END